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THE BROKEN RING

A ROMANCE

BY

✓
ELIZABETH KNIGHT TOMPKINS

Author of "Her Majesty," "An Unlessoned Girl," etc.



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THE BROKEN RING.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRINCESS HAS HER OWN WAY.

“**I**T is my wish,” said the Princess Lenore. Her coachman made a very faint protest with his shoulders and, with a silent prayer to his favorite saint, turned his horses to the left and took the road through Königreich. This was the first time he had ever driven Her Highness, but he recognized the finality of her words as thoroughly as the courier on the box beside him, or the maid who occupied the seat opposite the Princess, both of whom had been for months in Her Highness’s service.

“Ah, this is better!” exclaimed the

Princess, as the road wound upward from the dusty valley and entered the shadow of the pine forest. "We save fully five miles by going this way, and the road through Neutralstadt is so intolerably long and uninteresting that I vowed I would never go over it again," she went on, apparently addressing Louison, but really trying to justify her wilfulness to herself, for making a criticism on her royal mistress's conduct was the last thing the stolid woman on the seat opposite her would have thought of doing. "Besides," she continued, "I don't believe we shall meet a single soldier in this out-of-the-way corner, and if we do, I am certain they will not molest us. We live in the nineteenth century, I am happy to say, and taking women prisoners is rather out of date. We shall be in Königreich only about an hour at the most," she concluded, dismissing the subject with a gesture in the royal style.

The road wound slowly upward, getting deeper and deeper into the forest, and the Princess soon forgot the fears that she

knew she ought to be feeling in her enjoyment of the drive. The season was late spring, and the loveliness which had already become a little shop-worn in the valleys was here displayed fresh from the manufactory. At every bend a little stream crossed the road ; sometimes there was a bridge, but generally they drove through the shining water which often came to the hubs of the wheels. The horses splashed it around them and, with checks loosened for the upward climb, dipped their noses deep in, long after their thirst was satisfied. The Princess would not have them hurried.

“You see how deserted this road is,” she explained to her anxious coachman. “The grass is actually growing in the wheel tracks, and once we get to the top, we can go very rapidly the rest of the way. We shall be in Neutralstadt again in a very short time. If it were not for crossing the streams, I would get out and walk,” she added. More alarmed than ever at these last words, the man whipped up his horses, and before long they were

at the top of the pass, with a glorious prospect of hill and valley on all sides of them.

“Look, Louison, that is the way we would have gone if we had obeyed instructions,” said the Princess, pointing out to her maid the long, flat, and uninteresting detour at their feet. “How much better this is!” she exclaimed, as the horses began the descent, feeling that she would like to scream or sing or let go in some way or other, as she felt the rapid motion and the breeze in her face made by their going, for the day was breathless. “How hot and dusty it must be down there!” she went on.

As she spoke, the horses swung around an abrupt bend in the road and came to a standstill as quickly as the momentum they had gained would let them; for there in a level bit of ground was an encampment of half a dozen tents, and the road directly in front of them was occupied by a detachment of soldiers in the dull blue of the *Königreich* uniform. The soldiers were less surprised, for they had evidently

heard them coming. Four of them flew to the horses' heads, and one who had been standing apart, apparently an officer and the leader of the little party, stepped forward and saluted. He was a rough-looking young man in a big felt hat, with a week's growth of beard on his chin. The Princess lowered her veil and said, haughtily, motioning to the man on the box :

"My courier has our passports, if that is what you wish."

"I am sorry to trouble you, Madam," the young man replied, as he took the passports.

"They appear to be quite regular," he said, when he had examined them carefully ; and before handing them back, he took another look at the Princess, apparently to see if her description tallied with that of the Mme. Ferrand in the passport, for this was the name under which she always travelled. As he looked an expression of complete surprise crossed his face, and he uttered an exclamation under his breath. Then, holding out his hand to assist her, he said calmly :

“Princess, I shall have to trouble you to get out.” There was such an air of calm certainty about him that the Princess knew that no denial of her identity would be of any use, even if she could make up her mind to utter one.

“May I ask what is the meaning of this?” she said instead, in the most royal of manners.

“Your papers pass Mme. Ferrand, not the Princess Lenore of Herzogthum,” he explained composedly, and repeated his request that she would alight, adding: “My name is Delorme and I am a captain in the Königreich army.”

“And what do you intend to do with us?” she demanded haughtily.

“I shall take Your Highness to the headquarters of the army,” he replied, with the utmost self-possession. One would have thought he was in the habit of daily intercourse with princesses. Lenore wanted to inquire why he made her get out of the carriage then, but her pride would not let her ask any more questions, and, taking no notice of his offer of assist-

ance, she stepped to the ground and stood awaiting further orders.

"Will Your Highness have the goodness to come over here," he continued, leading the way to the last tent in the encampment. There he stood aside and motioned her to enter. "I am sorry I have no chair to offer Your Highness," he said.

"It makes no difference," the Princess replied coldly.

"I will leave Your Highness here then till we are ready to start, which will be in about half an hour. Is there anything I can do for Your Highness's comfort?"

"I should like my maid," she replied.

The young man bowed, picked up some saddle-bags that lay already packed on the ground, and left the room. In a minute she was joined by Louison.

"Well, Louison," said the Princess, looking up from the foot of the camp-bed on which she had seated herself, "I seem to have got us into trouble."

"It is Your Highness that will suffer for it; but, with Your Highness's per-

mission, I will pray to Our Lady that we may be quickly released."

"Certainly, if it will be any comfort to you," answered the Princess. The maid retired to a corner of the tent and, sinking on her knees, began to tell her beads in an absorption that took no notice of surroundings. Her mistress, having nothing else to do, took a look around the tent in the hope of finding out something about the character of her captor; but there was absolutely nothing to see except the bare sides and the bed on which she sat.

Captain Delorme had said half an hour, but it was fully an hour before he appeared again and requested her to accompany him. Everything was packed up ready for a start, as the noises she had been listening to had led her to expect. The young man placed her and Louison in her carriage, which now had two soldiers on the box. The Princess looked around for her own men, but did not see them. Here she sat while the tent in which she had been was pulled down and piled on

the baggage wagon, the work of a few minutes ; and then they started down the road, a detachment of mounted soldiers in front and their Captain riding beside her whenever the road was wide enough to permit it.

The Princess felt decidedly uncomfortable, not because she had any particular fear of what was to happen to her, but because it had been her own wilfulness that had put them in this predicament. It was not by any means the first time that unpleasant consequences had happened from her love of having her own way, but they had never before been so serious. What a fool she had been to go into the enemy's country, with no necessity on her stronger than a dislike of dust and monotony and an intense love of romantic scenery. Æsthetic considerations had no place in war-time. She was glad that her men were out of sight, for she could fancy the indignation that her coachman, whose courage was evidently not his strong point, was feeling towards her, and was sure that no respect

for her rank would keep them entirely out of his expression. As for Louison, so long as she was allowed to say her prayers in peace, no earthly happenings could move her even to regrets. "It is the will of God, Your Highness," was the unvarying formula on all occasions. Her mistress often wondered if she ever had an acute realization of what was going on in the world around, and whether her vivid interest in her spiritual life did not overshadow all bodily sensations to such an extent that she was hardly conscious of them. She was gazing now at the bottom of the carriage with a rapt, unseeing expression of countenance, and by the slight movement of her lips the Princess knew she was still praying for their deliverance out of the hands of their enemies. She herself raised her eyes and they fell on Captain Delorme, who was riding beside the carriage, a little in front of where she was sitting. She noticed a decided change for the better in his appearance. He still wore his flannel shirt and undress uniform, decidedly the

worse for wear, but he had found means to shave himself and to tidy himself up generally until he looked like a different man. She now made the discovery, which she would not have suspected on his first appearance, that he was unusually good-looking, with a clear skin, regular features, and a serious, somewhat severe expression. She had just come to this conclusion, when his face changed, an expression of intense amusement came over it, his eyes sparkled with fun, the severe lines relaxed, and he looked like an entirely different person and at least half a dozen years younger. The Princess followed the direction of his eyes in time to see a mule, that one of the soldiers was riding, in the act of taking a vicious nip out of the hind-quarters of the horse in front of him. Retaliation quickly followed, and it was some seconds before peace was established.

Captain Delorme turned to the Princess with a smile still on his face.

“It is astonishing what an intense dislike that mule has for that particular

horse. They never can be left near each other," he explained as her eyes met his.

"Indeed," she replied coldly, without the slightest trace of amusement in her manner. The lines of the young man's face stiffened up again, he looked straight ahead of him and did not attempt any more conversation. At first the Princess was angry at his presumption in addressing her at all without being spoken to ; but presently she wished she had not been quite so short, for they had reached the point where their road turned back into Neutralstadt and had taken a cross-road that she had never travelled before, and there were various inquiries she would have liked to have made.

They drove deeper and deeper into the forest, which was an especial characteristic of the upper portions of Königreich ; the day fulfilled its promise ; not a cloud toned down the intense blue of the sky ; in the open country it was probably very warm, but here in the depths of the forest it was cool and comfortable even at noon. As they drove, the Princess almost forgot

her situation in her intense admiration of the beauty around her. She was longing to alight and get a little closer to it when Captain Delorme's voice broke upon her abstraction.

"If you would like to get out and walk a little, Princess, we will rest the horses," he said considerately. She turned and looked at him, still full of her enjoyment, for she had forgotten his existence. Before she spoke, however, it all came back to her. The look of delight faded out of her eyes and was replaced by one of chilling indifference as she said, representing a great desire to lay hands on a little close, delicate green vine that was carpeting the ground:

"No, I thank you, Captain Delorme. There are too many spectators." He bowed and rode on, but the Princess did not lose herself again. She began to be conscious of feeling intensely hungry and decidedly irritable in consequence, and wished that the Captain would speak to her again, so that she could let out a little of it on him. She wondered if she

was not to have anything to eat until she reached their destination, which she knew to be still a long distance off. About one o'clock, however, her anxieties were relieved by hearing Captain Delorme call a halt in an opening in the forest, by the side of one of the many little streams that always brought up Königreich to the Princess's mind. Refusing the Captain's suggestion that she get out, she sat still in the carriage, from which the horses had been taken out, and watched the soldiers prepare their meal, which consisted of bacon, very solid bread, and coffee without any milk. At an order from the Captain, one of the soldiers brought to her and Louison their portions on the two brightest tin plates which their outfit contained. He was the Sergeant of the troop, and had a kindly, good-natured face. The Princess was pleased to be most gracious in her reception of him and his offerings.

"It is very poor fare for Your Highness," he remarked apologetically.

"It is certainly better than nothing," she answered, with a smile, wishing she

could store up her present appetite for some occasion when there would be greater demands on it.

They rested their horses for an hour or more, and then started on their journey again. As before, Captain Delorme rode a little in advance of the carriage, but he did not give her either a word or a look. Probably on this account, his clear-cut profile began to acquire an interest for the Princess that it had not heretofore had, and she found her eyes constantly coming back to it, while she wondered what he could be thinking of so intently, and if he were never going to speak to her again. At length she grew so tired that she had no attention left either for him or for the country through which they were traveling, and she lay back in a corner of the carriage with her eyes shut, conscious of nothing but the fact that she was intensely wretched, and wishing devoutly that she had had common-sense enough to keep out of danger.

It was nearly dark before they reached their destination, the headquarters of the

army of Königreich, temporarily established in a farm-house not very far from the frontier of her father's province, the Duchy of Herzogthum, where the seat of the war was at that time. In spite of her fatigue, she had been conscious that Captain Delorme, some minutes before their arrival, had spurred on his tired horse and had ridden ahead of the troop, Sergeant Kriegmann taking his place at her side. When they drove up in front of the farm-house in the midst of a cloud of dust so thick that almost none of their surroundings were visible, an elderly man in uniform came out on the steps attended by several younger officers. The soldiers saluted, and by his likeness to his pictures, the Princess knew that this was the Commander-in-chief of the Königreich army, the great General Malakoff, who stood uncovered before her. She had been wondering all day if she should see him. He came up to the side of the carriage and offered her his hand to alight.

"I regret exceedingly that this was necessary, Princess," he said, with an air of grave courtesy.

The Princess was so tired and so disgusted with life generally that she longed to be ungracious, but there was something in the General's manner that forced her to be as polite as he had been.

"What are you going to do with me, now that you have captured me?" she asked, with the ghost of a smile.

"We shall have to think about that. Nothing very dreadful, I am sure. What can I do for Your Highness now?"

"Only let me have something to eat and a place to go to bed in, and I shall be satisfied," she answered as, slowly and painfully, she stepped down to the ground.

"Your Highness is very tired," he said sympathetically, and, offering his arm, he conducted her into what had evidently been the best parlor of the farm-house.

"Not so tired as stiff from sitting so long," she answered.

"It is all extremely rough and primitive, but we will do the best we can. Your Highness's room, such as it is, will be ready in a moment," he continued, seating her in the least uncomfortable chair the room contained.

The Princess suspected that it was General Malakoff's own room that they gave her, although there were no indications of rank in the bare room into which she was presently conducted. Here Louison brought her some supper of a decidedly better quality than the meal she had eaten that noon, and, going straight to bed in the hard and narrow little camp-bed that occupied one corner of the room, she soon forgot her troubles in sleep, in spite of the subdued murmur of voices that came from the next room for a long time after she had laid her head on the pillow.

If she could have looked through the thin partition, she would have discovered General Malakoff sitting in front of the open window, with a candle on a table beside him, around which moths, May-bugs, and various fowls of the air were flitting. He seemed lost in thought, but presently he roused himself and rang the bell which also stood on the table beside him, and gave an order to the soldier who answered it :

“See why Captain Delorme does not come to me.”

A few minutes later the young man entered.

“Excuse me, General,” he said easily, and without any of the excessive deference which the other officers paid their great commander. “I was so dirty that it took me a long time to get clean, and I thought I should never get enough to eat. We have been on short commons lately.” He had changed his old clothes for the uniform of a staff-officer on General Malakoff’s personal staff, and this made a still greater improvement in his looks over his first appearance on the scene.

“Well, what’s the news?” the General asked familiarly. “And what are we to do with Her Highness?” he continued, when Delorme had given his report, ending up with the account of the capture of the Princess. His manner was not in the least such as one would expect from the Commander-in-chief of the army towards a simple captain,

“What have you thought of doing?” demanded the young man in his turn.

“I suppose the appropriate thing is to send her to the Capital——”

“But you don’t want to do that,” interrupted Delorme. “For one thing, if the King were to see her, he would probably send her directly home with an escort and an apology—he is perfectly capable of it,—and we would lose the advantage of having her royal person in our hands.”

“That is very true; still you might as well give your real reason, Raoul.” They both laughed at this, and then there was a short silence, which the younger man was the first to break.

“General.”

“My boy.”

“You know that old mill where I was last month? It is strong enough to stand any ordinary attack, and so out of the way that nobody would find it unless they went out especially to look for it.”

“And you think that would be a good place to take your Princess to? Is n’t it very rough?”

"It could be made habitable."

"It is clearly my duty to send her to the Capital," remonstrated the General.

"General Malakoff's wish is his duty," remarked Delorme. Then he added in an entirely different tone: "Besides, you know, you can think up some plausible reason why it would not have done to send her there."

"I don't know about that," the General replied. "If I did send her to the mill, I suppose Lindsay would be a good man to put in charge of her," he continued.

"Lindsay!" exclaimed the Captain, contemptuously.

"You surely don't suppose I'd give it to a boy like you, Raoul?" The young man laughed.

"Do you think you can tease me?" he demanded. "No, General, this is a direct interposition of Providence, and you must n't try to thwart it."

"I am an utter fool and deserve to be kicked out of the army, but I suppose you will have your own way as usual," the General remarked affectionately. "Take

your Princess then, and carry her off to the mill, and make love to her or do anything else you like, so that you do it discreetly and don't let her escape or get me into any trouble." The Captain frowned.

"There won't be much love-making," he said, shaking his head. "I doubt if she favors me with a civil word. I am the dust under her feet."

"You think her as attractive as you did in Paris then?" demanded the General.

"Well, she suits me," the young man replied tranquilly. If only the Princess could have heard him!

"How I do spoil you, Raoul. I certainly ought to send her to the Capital," remarked the General.

"You have a great deal to answer for," Delorme replied, with mock severity. "I might have been a very decent fellow if I had been brought up better."

"Well, you suit me," said General Malakoff, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder.

CHAPTER II.

AND SUFFERS THE CONSEQUENCES.

THE Princess Lenore awoke the next morning from so sound a sleep that it was fully two minutes before she could decide where she was and could realize what had happened to her. She was quite rested, being young and strong enough to sleep off almost any fatigue in a long night. Her position did not seem so utterly hopeless, either, for she felt sure that not even General Malakoff would dare to detain her long. She would soon be given her freedom, perhaps that very day, and she was not sorry for a chance to see a little something of that world-renowned soldier and diplomat. Next her thoughts wandered to the young Captain who had taken her prisoner, and she reflected that she would not mind

having an opportunity to impress him a little, he had seemed so singularly unappreciative of the importance of the Princess Lenore of Herzogthum. The Princess Lenore of Herzogthum was herein slightly inconsistent ; for when in the midst of the flattery and subserviency with which she was ordinarily surrounded she was pleased to play the radical and to rail a little against the excessive homage paid to her rank. An inconvenient recollection of this little fact thrust itself into her mind as she lay there in her hard, narrow bed, her cheeks still flushed by the heavy sleep she had enjoyed ; but she put it hastily aside for fear it might make her forego some part of the lesson that she intended for Captain Delorme. The Princess Lenore had learned by experience to be afraid of the power of her own logic in forcing her into courses of action directly contrary to what she wanted to do. At the present moment, although she told herself repeatedly that it was beneath her dignity to concern herself with what Captain Delorme did or left undone, or even

to notice his lapses, she was conscious of distinctly wanting to teach him a lesson. The entrance of Louison broke up these schemes of revenge.

All that day she sat in her room, listening to the bustle that was going on outside. She could see almost nothing from her window, which was on the side of the house. Messengers on horseback seemed to be coming and going all day; the rattling of spurs and the clanking of swords were heard continually in the passage outside her door; the sound of orders given in peremptory tones, but whose purport she could not understand, came through the windows. What was taking place? Were the Herzogthum and the Königreich armies still occupied in watching one another's movements, or had they actually come to an engagement? Towards evening, she could not stand the suspense any longer, and sent Louison out to make inquiries. She was gone so long that the Princess grew frightened and stepped out into the passage herself. Nobody was in sight except a sentinel in the momentary

glimpses she had of him through the open door as he passed to and fro in front of the house. She stood there for fully ten minutes, when a door at the end of the passage opened and Captain Delorme came towards her, looking in his trim uniform a different man from her companion of yesterday. The Princess was so alarmed by this time that she forgot her offended dignity.

“Captain Delorme, will you tell me what is going on?” she demanded, without taking the time to respond to his salutation. The young man hesitated, then said :

“There has been an engagement, Princess.”

“Which side got the best of it?” she asked as calmly as she could. The Captain hesitated again.

“It was not decisive,” he replied at length without looking at her.

“I suppose you do not like to say you were beaten,” exclaimed the Princess, impulsively, for her long suspense had affected her nerves and, consequently, her

temper. No sooner had she said this than it occurred to her that his consideration was probably on her account, not his own. She was ashamed of her words and would have given a great deal to recall them, which made her go on to add insult to injury by saying :

“You do not care about fighting, I see.” The young man’s eyes flashed lightning, but he only remarked calmly :

“It was over before we knew anything about it,” and deliberately turning his back on her, he walked down the passage and out of the door, leaving her standing there, annoyed at him, but more so at herself. She had not taken the best means of teaching him respect for her rank and her person ; but he certainly was most provoking with his nonchalance and calm manner of passing over her words as of no account.

Her mind was diverted from this unpleasant subject by the appearance of Louison, full of particulars of the engagement, obtained from Sergeant Kriegmann. He had been less considerate than his

Captain and had given her what claimed to be an accurate account of a defeat a division of the Herzogthum army had suffered at the hands of his countrymen.

The Princess passed the rest of the day in a state of intense anxiety. In the evening, word was brought her that General Malakoff desired an interview. She rose to her feet as he entered the room.

“I regret to learn, Princess,” he began when he had made some inquiries about her health and comfort,—“I regret to learn that you have been told about the engagement between our troops this morning.” The Princess stretched out her hands towards him. Her day of anxiety had made her so nervous that she thought she could not stand any more suspense.

“Tell me the worst,” she implored. General Malakoff looked at her kindly as he replied :

“I am afraid that you heard the exaggerated reports that came first. It was nothing of any importance, not a dozen men killed on either side ; and although

we got rather the best of it, it was not of any consequence to either side."

The Princess sank down on a chair.

"Are you telling me the exact truth?" she demanded.

"On my honor as a soldier—as it is known to me," answered the General. She laid her arms on the back of her chair and buried her face in them, completely overcome. In a minute she raised it again. The General had supposed she was weeping, but there were no traces of tears on her cheek.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked, with a complete resumption of her ordinary manner. Her visitor seated himself opposite her.

"I have been on horseback all day," he said, half apologetically; then continued: "I suppose, Princess, you have been wondering what we are going to do with you." The Princess bowed assent and the General continued: "There are reasons why it seems best not to send you home at once, so I am going to detain you for a little while;—not here, we have

not suitable accommodations for you here, but in a place I have selected. We will do our best to make you comfortable and will not impose any restrictions that do not seem absolutely necessary." The Princess looked at him with a half smile on her lips as she said :

"I am your prisoner, and of course you can do what you please with me." The man before her was of such world-wide importance that she could not resent treatment from him that she would have resented from a lesser person. She did not feel at all inclined to treat him as an enemy, for she had read of him and admired him long before there was any question of hostilities between his country and hers. Indeed, it was only within the last few years that he had taken the command of the army of Königreich, his native land, and his reputation had been gained in other countries. Nobody quite understood what made him accept his present position, when much greater opportunities for distinguishing himself were open to him than any this little kingdom

offered. Nevertheless, since he had been at the head of military affairs, Königreich had steadily been elevating herself in the estimation of the world until she promised to leave her old rival Herzogthum far behind her. The present war was a last effort of Herzogthum's to hold her own.

"I hope it will not make you have any personal feeling against me," said the General, with a charm of manner that few persons could resist when he chose to exert it. "Your Highness must distinguish between me in my official and in my private capacity. When this little affair is happily settled, I hope I shall have an opportunity to pay my respects to Your Highness."

"I suppose I ought to hate you," said the Princess, with a smile. "It is dreadfully unorthodox not to ; but in order to hate your enemies with the correct amount of ferocity you must never know them. They say that railroads and telegraphs are doing away with patriotism, and while I don't believe that, I do think they are de-

stroying the animosity towards foreigners that often used to go with patriotism."

"Your Highness is quite right," replied the General. "And it is travel that is going to put an end to war even more than the improvements in fire-arms. You can't get up the proper thirst for the blood of an enemy with whom you dined and went to the theatre the week before. Cosmopolitanism and race prejudice don't go together, and the decrease of the latter is just another name for humanitarianism, and once you are inoculated with that, you don't care much for human targets for your bullets."

"Then it really is not necessary I should hate you in order to show my love for my country? I am glad of that," said the Princess, smiling as she added: "General Malakoff's name has always had a great interest for me."

"I used to know the Duke and the late Duchess, your Highness's mother, fairly well," remarked the General. "And your godmother, Queen Lenore," he added.

"I have heard so," replied the Princess,

and then wished she had not said that, for the reports that had come to her ears were not such as one would refer to lightly. The General did not appear to think it strange—he was not a man to whom gossip about himself would be often repeated—for he went on :

“She was a most uncommon woman and she had a most unhappy life. I had the deepest respect and admiration for her, and I have always taken an interest in Your Highness for her name’s sake.”

“I do not remember her at all,” Lenore replied gently, wishing that she could read the thoughts of the brave soldier before her, and know the true inwardness of the stories that had always interested her so greatly in spite of the fact that she did not know either of the persons concerned. The name of her godmother, Queen Lenore, had always had a strange fascination for her, and she had treasured up any little bits of information about her that came in her way.

“No, I suppose not. Your Highness was too young when she died.”

Then there was silence between them for some minutes which the Princess hesitated to break. Finally the General spoke :

“ I suppose Your Highness would like some particulars about what is to become of you, but I suppose it would be too utterly unorthodox to give them to you. I am going to put Captain Delorme in charge of you.” The Princess raised her eyebrows slightly, but did not speak.

“ Does n't Your Highness approve of my choice ? ” he asked.

“ It is not a matter of the slightest importance,” she replied indifferently.

“ There is no man in the army in whom I have more confidence, and I have known him all my life,” he continued. “ I am sure he would never intentionally do anything to annoy Your Highness.”

“ It was nothing—only——” Here she paused.

“ Only what, Princess ? ” he demanded. She hesitated, looked a trifle confused, but finished her sentence :

“ He is not very—deferential.” The

General looked as if he would have given a great deal to laugh, but he restrained himself and replied :

“I will speak to him. I am sure it must have been unintentional.” The Princess colored.

“I beg you will not,” she remonstrated warmly. “You would make me ridiculous. Deference is something that must be spontaneous.”

“I think you may trust me with your dignity, Princess,” he replied. “My caution shall be of a general character. Delorme is a fine fellow, all the same, and I am sure Your Highness will recognize it when you have seen a little more of him, even if he is a trifle unconventional at times. He has two failings however——” Here he stopped abruptly. The Princess restrained her impulse to ask what these were for fully a minute; then her curiosity got the better of her dignity.

“Are n’t you going to finish your sentence, General Malakoff?” she demanded.

“I thought Your Highness did not appear interested,” he answered.

Lenore looked up at him quickly, wondering if he were actually teasing her, but nothing could have been more innocent than his face.

“On the contrary, I am most intensely absorbed. It is very thrilling. My future jailer, Captain Delorme of the *Königreich* army and General Malakoff’s staff, has two faults. I must certainly know what they are. The knowledge may be useful to me.” The General smiled and a gleam of appreciation came into his eyes. He also found the conversation intensely absorbing.

“Is Your Highness thinking of trying to escape?” he demanded.

“Do you actually expect me to tell you if I am?” she asked in her turn.

“At all events, Delorme’s faults are such that a knowledge of them won’t be of any service in that direction,” he answered. “He has no love of gold and is not susceptible to attentions from those of high estate, unless they spring from a real liking for himself. His two faults are, first, pride, and second, a very quick temper.”

"Is that all?" she exclaimed in a disappointed tone. "Those are not interesting at all. I have them both myself and a dozen or two others besides. I am afraid I cannot take an interest in your *protégé*, General Malakoff, even if he is to be my jailer. Let us talk of something else. May I ask when I am to leave, or is that also forbidden?"

"And have Your Highness planning a rescue?" asked the General, laughing. "Never, Princess. You will be told in plenty of time for your maid to get your things together."

"That won't take long. I had very little luggage with me. Well, I don't suppose I shall need elaborate toilets where I am going?"

"I am not giving any information whatever," replied the General as he rose to go. After he had taken leave of her and had reached the door, he turned back and said in an off-hand manner:

"Nevertheless, Princess, Delorme is usually considered very good-looking and singularly attractive in manner. Not a

few great ladies have been pleased to be kind to him."

"I have not noticed," replied the Princess, untruthfully.

After he was gone, she fell to wondering why the General seemed to attach so much consequence to her opinion of such an unimportant individual as his aide-de-camp, and why he himself seemed to think of him in such a special way. In her experience, generals were not in the habit of bestowing much notice or consideration on officers of inferior rank. Was it simply the force of the young man's individuality, or was there some hidden reason in the background? Who was this Captain Delorme anyway? Could there be some unacknowledged tie between him and his Commander-in-chief?

In the meanwhile, General Malakoff had gone to the parlor by way of the passage, instructing the soldier on duty to send Captain Delorme to him. When the latter appeared, he lowered his voice for fear of any syllable of what he said penetrating the thin partition into the room beyond.

“Well, Raoul,” he said, “she suits me too. I will do anything in the power of a mortal, even to getting myself into disgrace with His Majesty.”

“I knew you would,” the young man replied warmly.

And then they both let the subject drop and passed on to other matters.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE WING.

THE next day was warm and decidedly monotonous to the Princess. General Malakoff had offered her all the books he had with him, but as his collection was limited to some works on military tactics and a book or two on the higher mathematics, it was not of much use to her. The evening was relieved by another long visit from their owner, which left them better pleased with each other than ever.

That night it was so warm that she was a long time getting to sleep, and it seemed to her that she had been asleep only a few minutes when she was awakened with a start by some one entering her room with a lighted candle.

“What is it?” she exclaimed in a fright-

ened tone, and then she saw that the intruder was Louison.

"We are to leave here within an hour, Your Highness," she explained, and went immediately to work in the most composed and business-like fashion to get her mistress's things together ready for packing.

"Who says so?" demanded the Princess.

"The Captain said it was by General Malakoff's orders, Your Highness, and he told me to say that we are to go on horseback and to pack Your Highness's things immediately. They will be taken on a mule."

"But I have n't any habit or anything," remonstrated the Princess, as she proceeded to get into her clothes as rapidly as possible. Louison was equally expeditious, so after they were ready, they had a long time to sit and wait before a knock came at the door, and General Malakoff came in.

"The hour is come, Princess. In about ten minutes it will be time for you to set out," he said, with a smile.

“I wish you were going with me,” she replied.

“If I were twenty years younger, it would be hard to prevent me,” he said.

“If you were twenty years younger I should not want you,” she returned.

“Does Your Highness object to young men then?”

“Object? No. But I have no place for them in my life. I can never meet them on the only terms that make intercourse with one’s fellow creatures worth having.”

“Your Highness means?”

“On the terms of social equality and mutual freedom.”

“Is the etiquette of your court so strict?”

“I fear it is not only the etiquette; it is partly myself. I am afraid, General Malakoff, that I have an inordinate amount of one of the things you objected to in your young friend. I talk against social distinctions and rail against pedestals, but, all the same, I do not notice any inclination on my part to abdicate mine when

occasion offers. I adore equality, but it offends me to have people forget my rank or not to realize it fully."

"It is very natural; but we have not usually the grace to be so frank about our inconsistencies, Princess."

"I find it very easy to talk to you," she answered simply.

The General smiled with pleasure, but, to her delight, did not make her any return compliment. He certainly had all the tact with which the world credited him.

"I am afraid it is time for Your Highness to go," he said instead, and conducted her and Louison to the front of the house, where a soldier was holding two horses with side-saddles on them. Another soldier was seeing to their girths and Delorme was superintending the operation.

"Are you all ready, Delorme?" asked the General.

"Yes, General," replied the young man.

"Then come here," the General continued, leading him aside.

It was dark outside except for the starlight, but the light from the parlor window fell on Delorme, and the Princess saw that General Malakoff had laid his hand on his arm and appeared to be giving him directions of some kind in a low tone of voice, more the voice of a friend or a relative than that of a commanding officer. And yet she knew his voice could act the character perfectly from the tones that had reached her the last two days through the open windows. She knew, too, that General Malakoff was as much feared as loved by the soldiers who served under him. The two men returned.

“Princess,” began the General, formally, “I give you into Captain Delorme’s care, and he will be personally responsible to me for everything concerning Your Highness. I have known him all his life, and I assure Your Highness that you can trust him as implicitly as the person you trust most on earth. Now to horse.” He himself assisted the Princess to her saddle. When she was seated, she

noticed that a strap was attached to her horse's bridle, and that Captain Delorme held the other end.

"Is that necessary?" she demanded of the General, taking no notice of the young man.

"It seems best," he replied. "You see, the way lies over rough mountain roads, to which Your Highness is unaccustomed, and there is very little light." The Princess bowed and held out her hand to the General.

"I shall remember your visit to me with more pleasure than Your Highness will," he said, as he kissed it.

"There have been alleviating circumstances," returned the Princess, graciously.

Delorme now gave the word of command and the little party rode off into the darkness. There were about a dozen soldiers in all, although the Princess could not see to count them at the time, and a couple of mules laden with luggage. Louison's horse was also attached by his bridle to one of the other horses. It

seemed very dark at first, but as her eyes got used to the dim light, she began to distinguish trees and fences. It was a lovely night, too warm for comfortable sleep, but perfect for travelling, fragrant with the odors of the forest, into which they diverged almost immediately after leaving the farm-house. Frogs were croaking in marshy spots, and all the noises of a spring night were to be heard, for the horses' hoofs made little noise on the springy needle-sown road, and there was no sound of human voices. They rode in absolute silence, Delorme leading the way with the Princess beside him. He seemed to be very familiar with the country, for he paid little attention to where they were going, and when two or more roads met, made a choice with no perceptible hesitation. At length they emerged from the forest upon a high-road again, one with which the Princess was perfectly unfamiliar, and here, as she could see with her eyes now accustomed to the faint light, the Captain's demeanor changed. His manner became prompt and

alert. He placed four soldiers in front of them and ordered the man who had Louison in charge to ride up directly behind him.

At length they came to a toll-gate, and here he held a whispered conversation with the sleepy individual whom he aroused to open it for him. Then he exchanged a few words with the soldiers in the lead, and then came back to the Princess and took up her leading rein again. As they rode on, she noticed that he appeared more and more uneasy, turning continually in his saddle and straining his eyes into the darkness ahead of them, Lenore found herself growing very nervous, too, although she reasoned with herself that she did not need to dread what Delorme was evidently afraid of, the appearance of a party of raiders from her own country. Nevertheless, when the hoof of the horse in front of her struck something that resounded with a clang, she almost shrieked.

“Halt!” shouted the Captain. “See what that is.” The man dismounted and

by the aid of a match picked up something from the ground.

"It is a canteen, Captain," he said, and not one of our kind. We have nothing so old-fashioned in the whole army."

"I thought so," returned the Captain. The little troop stood motionless while their leader made up his mind what to do. Lenore found herself holding her breath, for fear it should make too much noise. Presently he rode to the head of his party, taking the Princess with him. Then he gave his commands :

"Follow me as quietly as you can. I am going to strike straight into the forest, and I feel confident that I can cut across to the road we were to take farther on and save the next two miles of the highway. It will be hard riding for you, Princess," he added, addressing his companion for the first time as he turned his horse straight into the pathless forest.

"I don't mind the riding," she said, with a slight emphasis on the last word.

In a few minutes Delorme stopped, lit a match, and consulted the little compass

that hung on his watch chain, then he turned his horse's head a little more to the east. It was dark, so dark that only good eyes and eyes that had been out in the night for some time could have seen two feet before them. The riding was hard, as the Captain had said it would be, but the horses were used to rough ground and found a way for themselves, for they had to be left to their own devices, except in regard to the general direction. Their progress was necessarily very slow. They had been in the forest about a quarter of an hour when Delorme ordered a halt, stood motionless, and appeared to listen.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as what was first only an indistinguishable sound defined itself into the beating of hoofs on the highway they had so recently left. It continued for some minutes and then died away in the distance.

"Your Highness nearly had a rescue," Delorme said to the Princess, with the first trace of excitement she had noticed in his manner.

“You would not have fought for me then?” she demanded.

“Most certainly; but the difficulty would have been to detain Your Highness and to do good work at the same time. Besides, even if we had got the better of it, unless we killed every man of them, Your Highness’s whereabouts would not long remain a secret.” He was certainly excited and a little jubilant. Probably if at all encouraged, he would become talkative; accordingly she did not answer this speech.

They rode along in silence for what seemed to her an interminable time, the Captain occasionally lighting a match and taking a look at his compass. Although he did not address her again, the Princess noticed that he took the most watchful care of her, seeing that her horse kept clear of bushes and did not go too near trees. Sometimes he had to throw the leading rein over her horse’s neck, but he always picked it up again when the ground became more open. At length they came into what was apparently a road, crossing

the forest at right angles to the way they were going.

“Here we are,” he exclaimed with a sigh of satisfaction. “We will let our horses rest a little. Now, Princess.” But before he could help her, she had slipped to the ground unassisted. She stumbled as she did so, and would have fallen if he had not caught her by the arm.

“It would have been better if Your Highness had let me help you,” he remarked quietly. Lenore swallowed the hasty answer that rose to her lips, and going over to a little mound of earth a few steps away, she seated herself upon it to get rid of her annoyance the best she could. Louison came up and offered her services, but finding that they were not wanted, she retired a little way off to say her prayers. The soldiers took off their horses to water at a stream near by, whose murmur the Princess could hear through the trees; Delorme had disappeared, too, so she was practically all alone in the darkness of night in the forest.

“I should not wonder if it were begin-

ning to get light out from under the trees," she thought to herself. At first, she rather enjoyed the sensation, but presently she began to get a little nervous. She had never been so entirely alone in all her life. An owl in a bush near by gave out a melancholy gurgle of sound and she started to her feet with a little involuntary cry.

"It is only an owl, Princess," Captain Delorme's voice said reassuringly from out the darkness. She had not been as unguarded as she had thought herself.

"I knew that, only it startled me, it was so sudden," replied the Princess, wishing it were not against her dignity to enter into conversation with her jailer, if only as a preventative against the perils and dangers of the night. She could see him now, leaning against a tree a little to the left of her, and she wondered whether he stood out of respect for her presence or because he preferred it. Presently she heard the soldiers bringing the horses back. One came up to the Captain, gave him something, and then retired to a

little distance, whence the sound of lowered voices and the neighing of horses could be heard.

Captain Delorme moved over towards her. As he came nearer, the Princess noticed that he had a paper package in one hand and a bottle in the other.

"Will Your Highness have a sandwich?" he asked, presenting the contents of the package. Then he took a little silver drinking cup out of his pocket, screwed it together, and pouring some wine out of the bottle into it, offered it to her. The Princess was only too glad to eat and drink. She thought that she had never tasted anything so good in her life. Her satisfaction made her gracious.

"Are you not going to have something, Captain Delorme?" she asked almost pleasantly.

"Presently, Your Highness," he answered, and she could not bring herself to give him any more definite invitation to share her meal. However, when she had finished, she condescended to remark politely :

“I was very hungry.” Captain Delorme bowed without a word and retired out of sight.

After a little they set forth on their journey again. It was easier now, for although the road they were on was narrow and rough, it was a great improvement on the trackless forest. In spite of the tall trees which did their best to keep it out, a faint glimmer of light now began to be noticeable. The dark objects around took the definite shapes of men and horses and trees and rocks. It was a glorious morning, and as they wound their way upward, the air grew fresher and more fragrant, and the Princess forgot the hardships she had undergone and those still before her in her delight in the sensation of being alive. She glanced once or twice at her companion, but he seemed thoroughly absorbed in the scene around them. For some time she had been hearing a noise in the far distance, at first indistinguishable, but which presently resolved itself into the roaring of water. At length her curiosity got the better of her,

and seizing an opportunity when Captain Delorme happened to be looking over towards her side of the road, she asked him :

“Is there a waterfall near by ?”

“What Your Highness hears is the water flowing over the mill-dam.”

“The mill-dam ?”

“Then General Malakoff did not tell Your Highness where we are going ?”

“He did not tell me anything,” she answered.

“We are going to a deserted saw-mill in these mountains, and are nearly there. It is built of stone and is very strong, and we have done our best in the short time we have had to make it habitable for Your Highness.”

“I don’t see why you did n’t send me to the Capital if you intended to keep me prisoner,” the Princess exclaimed a trifle petulantly.

“This was General Malakoff’s decision, and it was no doubt influenced by reasons of state,” the young man replied gravely, without the slightest change of counte-

nance. "I hope, Princess, that you are not afraid of a deep ford," he added a second later.

"How deep?" inquired the Princess.

"Your Highness will have to take your foot out of the stirrup. There was once a bridge here, but it was washed away long ago, and there has been no occasion to build it again."

"And my horse?" she asked.

"The horses in this part of the country are all used to fording streams, and this horse is especially good at it. I tried him myself in some water yesterday."

The noise of the water became louder and louder, and at length they came to the banks of a glorious mountain river, which at the place the road crossed it was flowing in a sluggish-looking stream. The water seemed deep, and the Princess did not like the idea of riding into it very well, but she kept her fears to herself. Captain Delorme ordered two of his troopers to ride through first, so that he could judge of the depth, and then he started with the Princess, who had tucked

her feet up under her the best way she could. The water rose higher and higher.

"I am afraid you will have to kneel on the seat, Princess, and put your hand on my shoulder to steady you," Delorme remarked as he rode up closer to her. He himself was letting his legs dangle in the water in the most unconcerned way. His tone was so perfectly matter-of-course that the Princess obeyed.

At length they got into shallower water, and in a few minutes were on dry land again. The Princess looked around for Louison and found her kneeling upright on her saddle in the most unconcerned way, as if fording a deep river was an every-day event. Her mistress suspected that she was taking advantage of her attitude to run off a few prayers. For some reason, this idea made her give a little involuntary laugh, and she turned to see Delorme watching her with some curiosity in his expression, which immediately disappeared as his eyes met hers. Now, for the first time, she realized his dripping condition.

“Why, you are soaking wet, Captain Delorme!” she exclaimed before she thought.

“I can’t hurt my clothes, Princess,” he answered, with what was almost a smile.

“But you will take cold,” she remonstrated, but without a particle of warmth in her tone.

“Fortunately I don’t do that,” he replied, and the conversation dropped, for the mill now appeared in front of them. They had turned at the ford and ridden straight down the left bank of the river. The noise of the water was louder than ever.

The mill was very picturesque, for the forest had crept in close around it and had covered up whatever might have been unsightly. The rough-hewn stones of which it was built were gray and green with lichens and moss. A flagged courtyard with grass growing in the chinks was in front of the building, and as they rode over this the door opened and Sergeant Kriegmann appeared on the threshold, accompanied by a huge hound, who

rushed eagerly at Captain Delorme and proceeded to show his joy at seeing him by nearly knocking him down. He defended himself, laughing, until the dog's exuberance was quieted down a little and he had time to turn his attention to the Sergeant.

"Everything all right, Kriegmann?" he asked.

"Yes, Captain."

"Well, you may show Her Highness to her rooms. I would get the floors wet," he said, with a glance at his dripping trousers; then added, turning to the Princess: "I think I can assist Your Highness, however."

The Princess had had one lesson, so she let him help her off her horse. The Sergeant then led the way up a narrow creaking stairway that went straight up from the door of the mill into a little passage, out of which opened two doors. He opened the left-hand one and let the Princess precede him into a big apartment with a raftered ceiling and three great windows overlooking the mill-dam and

the torrent of water flowing over it. There was a small bed in one corner, an improvised washstand with a cracked mirror over it, and two rickety chairs. That was all the furniture, but everything was as clean as soap and water could make it. The floor was bare, but there was a strip of clean sacking in front of the bed. The Sergeant was very apologetic, but the Princess cut him short and dismissed him. She ordered Louison to close the rough wooden shutters, and, undressing as quickly as possible, she tumbled into bed and fell into a dreamless sleep, from which she did not awaken until afternoon ; for there were no sounds on this side of the mill except the rushing of the water, which drowned all that might have penetrated from the other side.

Thus began the first day of the Princess Lenore's captivity in the mill. Of the fact that so many more were to follow it, she had not the slightest idea. It is hard to tell what her thoughts would have been if she had suspected this, and also the fact that she owed her confinement in this

lonely spot to the admiration of the indifferent-seeming young man below stairs. Fortunately, that guilty person was spared such a calamity, and had only to suffer from her scorn of his lowly estate and her fearfulness of his possible presumption.

CHAPTER IV.

ROMANCE VERSUS REALITY.

THE Princess Lenore was romantic when she was at home in the midst of the royal inertness and aristocratic stupidity of her father's palace, and often wished that some event would take place that would vary the monotony and arouse a thrill of interest; but now that something really exciting had happened, she did n't even recognize the romance of it and wished heartily that she was still in possession of her own bed in which to lie awake and dream, and her own luxurious apartments in which to be comfortably bored. Yet what a delicious dream her present circumstances would have made. She, the Princess and heroine, taken a prisoner of war and confined with one attendant in the upper story of a

dilapidated mill. Below in the courtyard a squad of soldiers, her guards, commanded by a good-looking young captain under orders to make her a visit of inspection every day. Even the view from the windows was romantic: masses upon masses of pine-covered mountains all around, and below the windows a foaming, rushing mountain stream, sweeping in a waterfall over what had once been a mill-dam. She could n't help being impressed, in spite of herself, with the lavishness of beauty around her, but the other details of the stage setting were lost on her. What interested her most was that there were rats in the walls of the mill and she was afraid they might force their way in again, with an indignant protest against being turned out of their old haunts and a determination to know the reason why. Then, her bed, though clean, was anything but comfortable, with the strangest and most unaccountable lumps all over it; and although this Princess did not mind peas, or even beans, she drew the line at pumpkins. The toilet arrangements were most

inadequate, and the food only just swallowable. She did not complain to Louison, her only companion. She was not the kind of a woman who complains; she did not even make a detailed protest in her mind, but still she was acutely conscious, in a general way, of being very uncomfortable, and the fact that the unaccustomed confinement and lack of exercise was making her feel ill did not lessen this consciousness.

She was not especially alarmed about her personal safety. In these days they did n't do anything very serious to you when they captured you; but she was anxious to know what was going on in the world outside. Were the two countries settling their difficulties by arbitration, after the exchange of a shot or two and a few flourishes of trumpets, or even without them, or was a real war going on, and what was her country's fortune? In this out-of the-way spot not a rumor, not a sound reached her except the rushing of the water underneath. It was very stupid of her and very careless to let herself fall

into the hands of the enemy so early in the game, thus complicating matters and increasing her father's difficulties; but, someway, she had not found it possible to believe that people took other people prisoners nowadays, or that any one, even Königreich soldiers, would interfere with the Princess Lenore's liberty; and the road through the mountains was so infinitely more attractive to her than the dusty detour through Neutralstadt that she had felt herself justified in disregarding her father's directions as to her route.

At this place, on the particular day of which we are writing, a few days after her arrival at the mill, the Princess's thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of Louison to announce the arrival of Captain Delorme, and to request that Her Highness do him the honor to receive him, a formula that was repeated every afternoon at about this hour. Lenore turned from the window and told the maid to show him in, wondering for the twentieth time what he would do if she refused him admittance, and wishing it were not beneath her dig-

nity to try and see. Instead, she drew herself up to her full height, looking the daughter of a hundred dukes in every one of her sixty-nine inches.

“Good afternoon, Captain Delorme. What can I do for you?” she asked a little haughtily, as the young man entered with the customary salutation.

“I wish to know if Your Highness is as comfortable as could be expected, and if there is any service within my power to perform,” he answered in the customary formula, of which the expression only had been varied. He was standing just within the worm-eaten door, the light from the window falling full on the clear-cut, clean-shaven face, which the Princess hardly took the trouble to look at.

“Nothing, thank you, Captain Delorme. Everything is perfection.” There was not a trace of sarcasm in her voice, whatever there might be in her words.

“It is feared at headquarters that Your Highness’s health will suffer with the confinement,” he continued, “so permission has been given for you to walk in the

forest every day, under escort, provided you will give your promise not to attempt any communication with any one." The Princess drew herself up and answered coldly :

"Thank you, Captain Delorme, but I do not want any favors. You need not trouble yourself to procure any concessions. I am perfectly contented and perfectly well." She made a gesture of dismissal and the Captain started to go, but stopped at the door and turned :

"Princess," he said.

"Captain Delorme," she answered ceremoniously.

"I have always heard that Your Highness was a just woman, but it seems that report lied. It certainly is not just to overwhelm a man with scorn for doing his duty. I am a soldier in the employ of the King and under the orders of General Malakoff. I am set to guard a royal captive and obey my orders. May I ask how Your Highness would act if you were I?"

"I cannot imagine anything so prepos-

terous," the Princess answered promptly, and her tone was even more insulting than her words. The young man flushed, bowed again, and this time he left the room.

Lenore's conscience troubled her after this interview, and she could not help acknowledging to herself that she was unjust, which fact made her resolve to be more scornful than ever at their future interviews. Captain Delorme should be taught that it was not his place to lecture the Princess Lenore. Nevertheless, she wished she had not rejected the offer of a daily walk in the forest quite so decidedly, just as she had repented sending the Captain's books back unread a few days before. She had been dull so often in the course of her royal life that she was somewhat used to the sensation, but confinement in two rooms of a dilapidated mill, with absolutely nothing to do, was oppressive even for a princess. It was hot, too, and the forest looked so green and cool and inviting. It would be refreshing to stroll about in it. An escort would be a

drawback, but it would certainly be better than practising fancy knots in a piece of string, which was the only amusement her lodgings afforded her. A certain restlessness and the unspeakable dreariness of it all grew upon her to such a degree that, when Captain Delorme renewed his proposal a day or two later, she accepted it with royal condescension, as of one conferring a favor on a slave. The Captain replied that he would be at her service at ten on the following morning.

“Oh, do you go with me?” asked the Princess in an expressionless tone that made the young man flush slightly.

“Those are my orders,” he answered almost as haughtily as herself. “I shall be, as always, at Your Highness’s service.”

The next morning at ten, word was sent up that Captain Delorme was awaiting the Princess Lenore’s commands. She descended immediately, resisting an impulse to keep him waiting, as beneath her dignity. She had dreaded passing under the gaze of the soldiers, but Captain Delorme was the only person in sight.

She tried not to be grateful for his consideration. He saluted as she stepped out into the sunlight.

"I shall have to ask for Your Highness's parole," he said deprecatingly. She gave it promptly, but, in spite of herself, both her looks and her tone betrayed the humiliation she was feeling. Captain Delorme seemed to understand this, for he looked, not at her, but at the grass growing in the chinks of the rough stones over her head.

"Will Your Highness choose the direction in which you wish to walk, or shall I be your guide?" he asked.

"I should like to cross the river and walk straight on through the forest," replied the Princess. The Captain assented and led the way up the stream towards the rude foot-bridge that was built from boulder to boulder in the bed of the stream. As they started, four soldiers came from around the corner of the mill and fell into place about fifty feet behind them. Of these the Princess appeared to take no notice.

"Your Highness is not afraid to cross the bridge? It is very narrow and takes a strong head," the Captain said, as they approached. For answer she stepped upon the railless planks and walked across as calmly as if she were crossing the throne room of her father's palace.

They walked in silence for three quarters of an hour and then turned and walked back again, the four soldiers following at the same distance, but never taking their eyes off her. Lenore tried not to be conscious of it, but, in spite of all the beauty through which they were walking, she could not forget those eight eyes fastened on her back. The studiously careful way in which her companion kept his eyes anywhere but on her was even more disconcerting, and she was annoyed at herself for finding the silence oppressive. Altogether, she was glad when the walk was over; but, nevertheless, she could not make up her mind to decline the ordeal on the next day. The afternoon and evening had been so hopelessly long. She had slept herself out the first few

days, and now found it impossible to spend more than eight of the twenty-four hours in that delightful occupation.

A day or two later the program was varied by a dispute between jailer and captive. Lenore was seldom self-conscious, and this morning she forgot herself completely and uttered some exclamations at the beauty of the forest. Captain Delorme had conducted her to a spot in the heart of it, the source of one of the many streams in the neighborhood, and she had exclaimed "How very romantic!" before she remembered to whom she was speaking.

"Indeed it is," the Captain had replied calmly, indifferently, the Princess chose to think. Now that she had broken the silence involuntarily, she could not help going on a little farther:

"Though, of course, men rarely care anything for natural beauty." Her tone was several degrees cooler than necessary so as to make a low general average with her condescension in addressing him at all.

"Your Highness is mistaken," he as-

serted positively with as much haughtiness as herself. It was provoking that all the usual methods for keeping people in their places failed with this unimportant young man. His manner was always courteous but never deferential ; or, at least, only with the deference that man pays to woman, or victor to vanquished. It was the deference of the superior position to the inferior, her rank apparently making no impression on him. If the Princess was rudely haughty, and her conscience told her she had been so more than once, the Captain was politely haughty, not weighed down with a consciousness of her disfavor, as he most certainly should have been. So now when he answered so calmly yet so decidedly : "Your Highness is mistaken," she felt inclined to be very angry indeed, but combated it and replied almost as calmly as he had done :

"Men are less civilized than women, nearer the original savage, and an æsthetic appreciation of natural beauty is a cultivated taste."

“Most artists and poets have been men,” he replied parenthetically; then went on: “Your Highness thinks then that our remote ancestors had no appreciation of it? The situation of historical remains would seem to contradict that.”

“When a beautiful site was chosen for a building, it was generally for some other reason than beauty,—because of shade or water or fertile soil.” The Princess had recognized immediately that her original proposition would not stand investigation, but she would not back down. She fully expected the Captain to try to prove to her that it was indefensible, but he left her the last word and made no answer to her speech, which was infinitely more annoying. She made an inward vow that nothing should induce her to say another word to this insolent young man, but broke it a minute later, as they started on their homeward way, by remarking:

“You agree with me then?”

“No, Princess, I do not.”

“Why did n’t you say so then?” she broke out impatiently, for the long strain

she had undergone was beginning to tell on her nerves.

“Because I did not wish to prove Your Highness in the wrong, and because I saw that a difference of opinion would be annoying,” he replied tranquilly.

“Are you usually so considerate in an argument?” she demanded scornfully, with difficulty restraining the impatience his words caused.

“No, not always,” he replied significantly. The Princess was a little mollified. Here at last was a mark of respect for her superior position.

“And why did you do it now?” she asked in a gentler tone, determined to force some acknowledgment of her rank out of him.

“Because, under the circumstances, I wish to spare Your Highness every annoyance in my power. I am afraid there are far too many as it is.” The Princess frowned, and felt angrier than ever. She had entirely forgotten for a moment their relative positions. She wished that there had been something in his words to which

she could reasonably, or unreasonably, take offence; but there was not, so she attacked the subject at a new point.

“Then you think I am the kind of woman who takes a difference of opinion as a personal offence?”

“I should n’t presume to have any opinion on the subject.” The Princess flushed. His words reminded her uncomfortably of hers to him on the day when he had first conveyed to her permission for these daily rambles. His tone was more polite than hers had been, but something in it told her that her answer was in his mind as well as in hers. He showed plainly, too, that he did consider her that objectionable kind of a woman, and she felt aggrieved, at the same time that she could not help acknowledging to herself that her behavior to him gave ample evidence for his belief. They walked in silence for a few minutes until her anger cooled. It never, under any circumstances, took more than a few minutes with her. Then, in spite of herself, she could not help beginning the subject again. It was

so long since she had exchanged a word with any one but Louison, and she was not a silent woman.

“When I said that men were less civilized than women,” she began, “I was thinking of their cruelty in particular. If women had the ruling of things, war, for instance, would have ceased with the barbaric ages to which it properly belongs. All men are more or less cruel. Why, the day you brought me here, I saw the soldiers actually urge on some terriers to kill a cat, a poor, forlorn, starved-looking creature, who was making a noble fight for life. You all of you have a great deal of the original savage in you. You all instinctively love bull-fights and dog-fights, and things of that sort. You would just as soon an animal got killed as not—a little sooner!”

“I think you must acknowledge, Princess, that there are some exceptions to that rule,” the young man returned indifferently, though the fire in his eyes and a certain expression around his mouth contradicted his manner. Lenore was satis-

fied ; she had made him as angry as she had been, and they had reached the mill before her repentance arrived.

The great hound whom she had seen on the day of her arrival came rushing out to meet them, nearly knocking the Captain down with the warmth of his greeting.

“Down, Balder, down. Behave yourself,” said his master. The Princess’s eyes softened. She loved dogs.

“Why does n’t he go with us ?” she demanded.

“I was afraid he might annoy Your Highness.” Lenore was about to protest, when she was interrupted by the Sergeant, who came running up with a collar and a dog chain. He was about to take the dog away, but the Princess interfered.

“Let me see him a minute. I have a great many dogs of my own at home,” she said, her face saddening as she wondered how long it would be before she saw them again. Sergeant Kriegmann evidently understood her feelings, for he tried to divert her. The Captain had turned away to give an order,

“He’s a fine dog, Your Highness, and devoted to the Captain. The Captain risked his life to save him from a pack of wolves. See, here are the marks of their fangs on his ears, and now Balder is miserable out of his sight.” Captain Delorme came back in time to catch the drift of the Sergeant’s remarks, but not in time to stop him. His eyes met those of the Princess, and there was a stern look in them. He dismissed the man and the dog with a “That will do, Sergeant,” and remarking coldly, “Now, Princess, I am at your service,” conducted her across the court and up the stairs to the door of her apartment. When they reached the top, the Princess turned and said to her companion, who was a step behind her :

“I beg your pardon, Captain Delorme. It was not true what I said ; and I knew it when I said it,” and disappeared within the door which Louison had opened, leaving the young man on the stairs speechless with astonishment. There was quite a new expression on his face when he finally turned and went downstairs again. Their

walks were a trifle more harmonious after this. They exchanged a few words occasionally about the scenery—the only topic that seemed free from danger. Balder went with them, and soon struck up an intimate friendship with Lenore. He took a day or two to make up his mind about her, but after that there was no reserve. She was so much in the habit of talking to her dogs that she kept forgetting and speaking to Balder, in spite of the fact that she did not care to reveal to the Captain any different self from the proud, unreasonable one which he had heretofore seen.

One morning they walked farther than usual and came out of the forest on an old road which Lenore recognized as one that she had often passed over in her journeys to and from home. Since a new and better one had been built, it was seldom used, so seldom, indeed, that grass grew all over it. For the last ten minutes or so before they struck it Captain De-lorme had appeared uneasy.

“Now I know where we are,” he ex-

claimed in a tone of relief as they climbed down the little embankment beside it. "I really began to think I had lost my way."

"You seem to know this part of the country very well," remarked the Princess.

"I do. I was born not so very far from here," and he made a gesture towards the west.

"You are a native of Königreich, then?" asked Lenore. She was interested, for this was the first personal remark she had ever heard the Captain make.

"Yes, Your Highness," he answered simply, with no further explanation. She would have liked to ask him a few questions about himself, but his uncommunicativeness stopped her. Besides, she did not wish to appear interested.

They had walked along this road for about a mile, the four soldiers in the background as usual, when the sound of voices in the distance broke the stillness, mingled with the noise of horses' hoofs

and the clank of weapons. Captain Delorme signalled to the soldiers, who came up on a run.

“Behind those rocks up there!” he ordered. Then to Lenore: “Princess, I shall have to trouble you to come with me.” He unceremoniously took her by the arm, and in a second she found herself seated behind a mass of tall gray rocks a little above the road.

The sounds became louder. In another minute the riders, whoever they were, would be in sight around the bend of the road. Delorme and the Princess were a little apart from the others, behind a big rock with a crevice in it through which they could see a small section of the road.

“I have your parole, Princess,” said the Captain in a low voice. The Princess did not answer, for at that moment she remembered that Captain Delorme had that morning, for the first and only time, forgotten to exact it of her. Balder had come up with his foot torn and bleeding just as she stepped into the courtyard, and had distracted his master’s attention.

She did not look at her companion for fear of bringing the same recollection into his mind, but leaned eagerly forward to look out through the crack and see who the men might be. In another second she felt something placed over her mouth before she could utter a sound, her hands, which she raised instinctively to pull it away, were grasped in one strong one, and she herself was held as firmly as if it were a vice and not arms that were binding her. She felt immediately that to struggle was hopeless.

"I can't help it. If I let you escape, it will be my ruin. I have been careless and I have gone beyond orders in taking you so far from the mill," Captain Delorme's voice whispered in her ear in tones absolutely unlike his usual ceremonious ones. And then, helpless as she was, she saw a troop of her father's soldiers file by, with an officer at their head whom she had often met at the court of Herzogthum. They were so near that she could catch snatches of their conversation. It took several minutes for them to pass

and, all the time, she felt the restraining clasp of the Captain's strong arms, his warm breath on her neck, and the quick beating of his heart. She had never been so close to a man before, and though the offender was a humble subaltern in her enemy's army, she did not feel so outraged as she would have expected to feel.

When the sounds had died away in the distance, Delorme released her and she turned to find him looking at her with a look on his face that she had never seen before. He gave a start of surprise as he saw that his handkerchief had slipped down on her chin.

"You could have called," he exclaimed.

"Yes, I could have," she answered defiantly.

"Why did n't you?" he asked boldly.

"And let my father's soldiers find me, their Princess, in *your* arms?" she demanded with scathing contempt in her tones. Delorme's eyes blazed, but he only said calmly:

"It was a heavy price to pay. Your Highness need not even have explained

that you did not stay there because you liked it. My handkerchief would have told the story." It was now the Princess's turn to be angry, as the Captain had evidently intended she should be, and she was not slow to avail herself of it. She flashed on him one look calculated to reduce an ordinary man to ashes, and then started to climb back into the road again, Delorme and the four soldiers following her. When they reached the road, they fell into their usual order, Delorme at her side, the soldiers a little behind. Neither spoke a word or exchanged a look until they came to a place where the road forded a stream, and the only way for foot-passengers to cross was by means of stepping-stones, very far apart. Nevertheless, the Princess started resolutely towards them. Delorme placed himself in front of her.

"I beg your pardon, Princess. You will have to accept my assistance."

"I know it would be easy for you to force me to," she answered icily. The Captain stepped aside and let her pass

without another word. She began to cross with reckless speed, so reckless that she presently found herself standing up to her knees in water, while still several feet from the bank. She took no notice of her mishap, but walked calmly on through the water for the rest of the way, as if she had intended to do this very thing, her companion, in the meanwhile, looking on from a stone in the middle of the stream without a remark or even an exclamation. When he joined her again, he did not appear to notice her soaked condition and the way her skirts clung to her, trying to trip her up at every step. At last they did reach the mill. Delorme accompanied her to her door as usual. As they climbed the rickety stairs, the Princess turned and asked him in the most frigid of tones :

“Were you afraid I would break my parole, or did you happen to remember that you had forgotten to ask me for it?”

“I remembered. I never doubted Your Highness’s *honor*,” he answered just as coldly as he saluted and left her standing at the top of the stairs.

CHAPTER V.

GENERAL MALAKOFF MAKES A COMMUNICATION.

THE next morning the Princess received word through Louison that there were to be no more walks; and after that there was nothing to break the monotony except Captain Delorme's daily visit of inspection, now conducted more formally, if possible, than ever. She got into the habit of looking forward to it as the one event of the day, and dated everything from that hour. Louison, who had been a perfect attendant in a palace, was not the most satisfactory companion for a prisoner. Lenore had chosen her as the successor to a lively French maid who had married, simply because she was so silent and stolid, for she was heartily tired of Thérèse's volubility. Louison

was very religious and spent most of her time telling her beads. She had hopes of entering a convent some day, and her thoughts were so intent on the world to come that she hardly concerned herself with the present one. She took all events, no matter how unusual, in a matter-of-course way that was irritating.

On the twenty-eighth day Captain Delorme's place was taken by his Sergeant. The Princess had not listened to Louison when she announced him, supposing it to be the usual formula, and was consequently much surprised when she ushered in the weather-beaten face and stumpy figure of Sergeant Kriegmann instead of Captain Delorme's more harmonious features.

"Why, where is Captain Delorme?" she demanded involuntarily before the Sergeant could speak.

"The Captain, Your Highness, has been sent for by General Malakoff," answered the Sergeant, and then went on to perform his duty by making the necessary inquiries. The Princess detained

him in conversation for a little while, but she did not ask any more questions about Delorme, feeling that she had showed too much interest as it was. She liked Sergeant Kriegmann, and had pursued her acquaintance with him on several occasions since the day Balder began it. Asking questions would not have been necessary in any case, however, for the Sergeant had apparently only one subject of conversation, and that was "the Captain." He sang his praises constantly,—what a fine young man he was, and what a splendid soldier, and how much General Malakoff thought of him, and a dozen variations on the same theme. Still he did not give the piece of information of all others that the Princess wanted—when the Captain would return.

In the meanwhile, Delorme was riding through the forest a number of miles away. It was dark, dark and unusually chilly for the season of the year, when he pulled up in front of the farm-house in which General Malakoff was established. He dismounted and gave his horse into the

charge of the orderly who attended him. An officer, who was standing in the doorway, came forward and greeted him cordially, and took him to his room to get ready for supper, which was just about to be served. When, a little later, he entered the room which had once been the best parlor of the house, he found General Malakoff standing in front of the fire, talking earnestly with two elderly men whose uniform showed them to be of high rank. He received Delorme with great friendliness and then went on with his conversation. Half a dozen other officers, with whom the room was filled, crowded around Delorme, welcoming him cordially, although they kept their voices subdued as if awed by the group in front of the fire. No one, looking at the Captain's animated face and hearing his hearty laughter as he answered or evaded his companions' questions, would have dreamed he was the same young man who had accompanied the Princess Lenore in her walks, looking as if jokes and laughter were utterly unknown to him.

After supper was over, a very simple meal, General Malakoff withdrew into the adjoining room, motioning to Delorme to follow him. As soon as the door was shut, his whole manner changed.

"Well, Raoul, my dear boy," he said affectionately, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "how goes it?"

"Fairly well, thank you, General," said Delorme, returning his glance with one of equal affection. The General sat down in a chair in front of a table littered with papers, and Delorme seated himself opposite him.

"Tell me all about it," he began after a few questions about the condition of the part of the country around the old mill. "Is the fair Princess still cruel?" The Captain laughed as he answered:

"I don't wonder I feel cold to-night. I have been frozen for days until I wonder I have a spark of warmth left in my body."

"Are you cold? Then we'll have something to warm you up." He touched a bell on the table and when a soldier en-

tered, ordered him to fill a small kettle that stood on the hearth beside the fire. While this was being done, he talked with Delorme on military matters with all the condescension and reserve proper between Commander-in-chief and Captain. Then he dismissed the man, telling him he should want nothing more that night and, getting up, started to open a small cupboard, but Delorme jumped up and anticipated him, taking from it a big bottle, lemons, sugar, etc.

"Just you sit there," he said, motioning to an arm-chair in front of the fire, "and let 's see if my hand has lost its cunning."

"It is like old times, but it is n't appropriate that you should wait on me. It won't be very long, I fancy," he said significantly. Then added hastily, as Delorme looked at him inquiringly: "Well, we won't discuss that to-night. It is only that the last debauches have been more violent than ever. Come, tell me about your Princess, Raoul."

"She's not my Princess," replied Raoul, who had taken off his coat, rolled up his

shirt sleeves, and was busy with the lemons and sugar, first taking the precaution of locking the door. "I am the dirt under her feet, very pretty feet they are too, not too small, but just small enough."

"She does n't return your admiration, has n't fallen in love with you yet?" asked the General.

"Fallen in love!" exclaimed Delorme. "Why, she hardly knows I exist."

"But you are rather a good-looking, attractive young fellow."

"And so might her footman be. I wish I could tell you——" and here the young man began to chuckle.

"What?" asked the General, curiously.

"Oh, I don't dare. You 'd have me broken if you knew."

"You need n't tell me in my official capacity," said the General, laughing.

"Will you swear that my superior officer shall never know about it? I promise you there shall not be anything more of the kind, no matter how great an interest she takes in romantic scenery. I'll keep

solemnly to orders. I had too bad a fright. The cold chills that ran up and down my spine! I thought I was done for, for the Commander-in-chief could not have overlooked the fact that I had been abominably careless and was where I had no business to be."

"That sounds very interesting. I'll promise as solemnly as you like," said the General.

"Well, then," began Raoul, and plunged into an account of their adventure in the forest. "You are a man of some limited experience," he finished, with a mischievous look at the General, when he had described the unconcerned way in which the Princess had walked back to the mill, with her wet skirts flopping around her and an expression that was entirely out of keeping with her *deshabille*. The General had been very much amused. "You are a man of some limited experience, what do you think was the reason she did n't scream? Do you really think she did n't want her soldiers to find her in my arms? It seems ridiculous."

"I 'll be damned if it was," exclaimed the General, forcibly.

"How do you account for it then? I can't think of any reason that will hold water."

"You said she remembered that she had n't given her parole?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, then, do you want to know what I think—as a man of some limited experience?"

"That 's just what I 've been asking you."

"I think she did n't want a certain somebody who shall be nameless to be taken prisoner or to bring disgrace upon him."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Delorme. "That is even less plausible than the other reason. But you would n't think so, General, if you had seen her manner towards me lately. It is worse than ever. To prefer captivity to injuring me, how perfectly idiotic," and the young man laughed in rather a mirthful fashion.

"How does she treat you?" asked the General.

"She is absolutely unjust and unreasonable, although I suppose it is very natural under the circumstances. I'd want to kill her every time I saw her if I did n't want to subdue her more. The provoking part is that she is kind and gracious to the soldiers, and affectionate and altogether delightful to Balder." Captain Delorme looked at the fire and General Malakoff at Captain Delorme.

"Do you want to know what I think about it all, Raoul?" he asked presently. The young man nodded. "I think the Princess's jailer has fallen very deeply in love with his captive." Raoul sighed.

"You are right," he said, after a moment's pause. "Of course it is perfectly senseless, but, do you know, I do believe it began that time in Paris. Still I don't believe she would look at me even if I had a kingdom to offer her," he added sadly.

"Nonsense," exclaimed the General, emphatically. "I'll wager she is just as much in love with you as you are with

her, and this manner is just put on to hide it. Courage, Raoul. Who should hope if not you?"

"But she will be married to some other fellow before I have the ghost of a show," he complained. General Malakoff did not speak, then he said impressively :

"Raoul!"

"*Mon général.*"

"I am going to tell you a state secret, to put a trump card in your hand, and then leave it to you to play it when you like. Are you sure the door is locked? Then draw your chair a little nearer." He leaned over and whispered something in his companion's ear. The latter started, then exclaimed impetuously :

"I don't believe it. It is perfectly preposterous." The most overwhelming surprise was in his manner.

"Not so much as it seems on the surface," the General replied calmly, and whispered several sentences more. Raoul's eyes brightened as he listened. Finally he sprang to his feet and walked out of range of the fire-light.

“The story sounds plausible, but I find it hard to believe,” he said at length. “Perhaps because it does n’t seem quite in the usual course of events to get what you wished for most, all in a second.” Then he came back and asked several questions in rapid succession, all of which the General answered apparently to his satisfaction.

“And you have known it all these years,” he said at last.

“Yes, and that is the reason I let you have your way about this thing,” explained the General. “And I must say I am sorry for you if you can’t do anything with such a weapon as this.” Raoul took his hand and gave it an affectionate squeeze.

“Is there any end to what you are going to do for me?” he asked.

“I have n’t finished yet,” put in the General. Raoul did not notice the remark, but went on :

“Almost the first thing I remember is your kindness to me, and it has been so all my life. I never have done anything

to deserve it, and if I have been told the truth, it was in return for anything but kindness." General Malakoff turned in his chair and looked at the young man keenly.

"I have always wanted to ask what you knew, but have been afraid to. You have never given a hint," he said anxiously. Raoul looked away for a second, hesitated, then said bravely :

"I was told when we were in Paris—of course nobody knows anything about me here—that after years of friendship, my father quarrelled with you for—an unjust suspicion."

"You think it was unjust then?"

"I know it was. You would never entertain for a second the ambitions you have for my future if there were a grain of truth in the report"—he caught his breath before he finished—"that I was your son." He looked the General full in the face, and the General returned his gaze without lowering his eyes.

"Raoul," he began gravely, "I will defend myself to you when I would not

to another person on this earth. I have often wondered how much you knew, but was afraid to say anything for fear of putting ideas into your head that were not there before. I will tell you the truth. I would swear it, but I know you will believe me. I never was your mother's lover, and your father did us great injustice. He was unkind to her and I was sorry for her, and, yes, I loved her as I have never loved any other woman, but she was not a woman to stoop. We never acknowledged it but once in all those years, and then it was entirely unpremeditated and unintentional, in a moment of great excitement. I have kissed her hand, but that was all. You believe me?" The young man nodded, and the General went on: "I have not led an especially virtuous life, but whatever I have shrunk from, it has been the thought of her that has kept me back. She was a woman in a million, and I have had a living reminder of her in you, for you are very much like her, Raoul. And it is this that I cannot forgive your father for,

his not appreciating that woman and recognizing that she could not have been untrue to him. But I have loved you as if you were my own son, and being separated from you so much is one of the hardest things I have to bear." They sat in silence for ten minutes or so. The younger man was the first to rouse himself.

"I think I'll go back now," he said, stretching out his long legs. "Has my General any commands?"

"Not back to the mill?" exclaimed the General.

"Why not? It is moonlight, and I'll take the liberty of borrowing a fresh horse." The General was about to remonstrate, but Delorme interrupted him: "I'll stay, of course, if General Malakoff orders me to, but not otherwise." Then, changing his tone: "Please let me go. I can't be so far away after what you have told me. Besides, I think I might find it easier to believe if I were nearer." General Malakoff smiled.

"O these young lovers!" he exclaimed. "Go, my boy, and may my blessing

go with you, if you think it is worth having."

"And they call you such a hard, cold man," murmured Raoul.

"And so I am. You are my one soft spot, Raoul, and I wish you were n't so well aware of the fact, you young rascal. You'll get me into trouble some day by indulging you. The idea of giving Princess Lenore into the custody of a boy like you and sending her off to that God-forsaken place. I ought to be kicked out of the army." Raoul only laughed for answer, and was about to leave the room without another word when the General called him back.

"Wait," he said, "I have something of yours." He went to a narrow camp-bed in a corner of the room and, stooping, drew a despatch box out from under it. This he brought over to the table and opened with a key that hung from his watch chain, Raoul, in the meanwhile, looking on with great curiosity. From this he took a smaller box and, opening it by a secret spring, handed it to his com-

panion. Raoul's eyes lighted up when he saw what was within and he uttered an exclamation.

"You remember it then?" asked the General, in surprise.

"I should say I did. It was my greatest treasure, and I was heart-broken when you took it away from me. Oh!" he exclaimed, a light breaking over his face. "So that was what it meant. I might have known. How could I have been so stupid. I remember it all so well,—going to the strange big house and being awakened in the night after I had been put to bed and being frightened as they took me through the long, dark passages, and the lights and the gorgeous robes and all the rest of it. Oh, I remember it all, but I never knew what it meant until to-night! Now, at last, I believe it. But I must be off," he broke off impatiently, and would have gone that second, but the General stopped him again:

"What else do you remember?" he asked curiously.

"I remember it all, one thing in par-

ticular, but I will tell you all about it the next time I come. Don't keep me now. I am too far away and anything might happen while I am gone."

He was so impatient that the General let him go after giving him an order or two. He opened the door and disappeared into the darkness of the house in which the other inhabitants were sleeping. Telling the guard at the door to send his man after him in the morning, he saddled one of the General's best horses for himself, and rode off by the light of a faint, waning moon, half hidden by clouds. It was daybreak when he reached the mill. The last few miles up the steep mountain road Raoul had dismounted and walked beside his horse, drinking in long breaths of the fresh early-morning air, and smiling occasionally to himself with a happy thought.

And so it happened that the Captain's voice calling to Balder was the first sound that the Princess heard as she opened her eyes the next morning.

She waited for his appearance that

afternoon with some little anxiety; and when he came, his manner seemed different to her—less unfriendly and impassive. During his absence, she had come to a resolution, and when he turned to go, she proceeded to put it into effect.

“Captain Delorme,” she began.

“Your Highness,” he replied formally.

“Can you not give me some news? Does General Malakoff object to my knowing what is going on?”

“He has given me no such orders,” said Delorme. “There is very little to tell. Since Your Highness has been here there have been several skirmishes, rather indecisive on the whole, but nothing of any importance, and just at present there is an armistice of several days between the two armies.”

“And my father?” she asked anxiously.

“I believe the Duke is at the Palace at the Capital. He is not with the army. I saw General Malakoff last night, and I am sure he would have spoken of it if anything were the matter with him. Is there anything else I can tell you, Princess?”

“General Malakoff is a terrible man, is he not?” she asked. “He is perfectly charming, but I know our peasants make the sign of the cross when his name is mentioned; and my father has often said that the worst misfortune that ever happened to us was when the King of Königsreich sent for him to command his army.”

“I have some considerable acquaintance with him for my position,” Raoul answered, “and I think he is greatly misjudged. He is as fine a man as he is a soldier, and I believe nobody denies that. He is a little hard, I admit, but he has had a great deal to make him so.”

“They say at home that he is the power behind the throne now that the King is so infirm.”

“He has a great deal of power; but the King is not a man to let the reins drop from his hands so long as he is alive.”

“You will have a bad exchange when he dies, if all the reports about the Crown Prince are true,” remarked the Princess.

“When he comes to the throne, I say,

God help the people, for they will need it," Delorme replied solemnly.

"And yet he does n't show his cloven hoof," the Princess continued. "I have met him a number of times ; and last year he did me the honor of demanding my hand."

"Your Highness did well to refuse him," said the Captain.

"Oh, I shall never marry any one," the Princess began emphatically ; and then, remembering to whom she was talking so familiarly, she interrupted herself abruptly and dismissed the Captain, who left her presence with a smile on his lips, not at all dissatisfied with his interview.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCENE CHANGES.

THE relations of prisoner and jailer were rather more amicable for the next two days, but on the third hostilities were renewed. That afternoon the Captain mounted the stairs a little earlier than usual and, with apologies to the Princess, gave orders to the two soldiers who accompanied him to nail pieces of sacking over the windows, with the exception of a foot or two at the top.

"I regret it exceedingly, but I find it necessary," he remarked, apologetically. He did not explain that a couple of suspicious-looking hunters had been seen near by, but had succeeded in escaping the soldiers who challenged them, and that there were rumors of scouting parties from Herzogthum being in the neighborhood.

“It does not matter in the least,” the Princess replied haughtily. She had not known what to make of her jailer’s manner ; it had changed in some indefinable way, and once or twice she had caught him looking at her in a way she did not understand, and then smiling to himself as if at some happy recollection. Her own manner had thawed considerably in spite of all her efforts ; but this additional and, as she thought, superfluous privation brought their relations back to the point where they had been previous to Delorme’s visit to General Malakoff. For the next two days, he was not encouraged to make any remarks beyond the necessary inquiries.

On the day after that, Lenore was aroused from the day-dream with which she was trying to cheat an hour or so out of the long afternoon by the frantic clatter of hoofs on the paved court in front of the mill. She went into Louison’s room, which was on that side of the building, and looked out through a tiny hole Louison had made in the sacking.

The Princess would have been too proud to make one for herself, but she could not resist one already made. Captain Delorme had come out on the steps and was listening intently to the story a soldier was breathlessly narrating. Without a moment's hesitation, he gave some orders to the men standing in the court-yard, the exact meaning of which the unceasing noise of the river kept the Princess from catching. He looked very handsome, standing there bareheaded with the light full on his fresh, clean-shaven face, and Lenore, in the midst of her alarm, remarked it with a sigh. She turned to Louison, who was telling her beads in a corner, and tried to rouse her to share her excitement, but it was no use.

"Whatever comes is the will of God, Your Highness," she answered composedly.

The heavy doors of the mill were shut, and the horses that were picketed in the court brought into the granary, which was used as a stable. There were noises beneath that suggested the moving of fur-

niture and the building of barricades in front of the windows. The clank of weapons and the confused noise of mingled voices came up to where the Princess knelt on the floor, peering down through her spy-hole into the middle of the court-yard where Captain Delorme stood, calm except for the animation in his face, issuing his orders and seeing for himself that they were carried out. It was only ten minutes before he turned and came in, but it seemed an hour to the Princess. Then she heard his eager step on the stairs, and had just time to return to her own room before he was demanding admittance.

"I have to ask that Your Highness will keep away from the range of the windows," he said composedly, with no trace of excitement in his manner. "I have reason to expect an attack, and stray bullets often do mischief. I hope you will not be any more frightened than you can help," he added kindly. She did not answer, but her eyes sparkled. Here was hope of release. The next minute, for some unac-

countable reason, she did not feel so glad at the prospect. With Captain Delorme's withdrawal all her happy anticipations departed, leaving only vague forebodings and terror. In her imagination, she saw the figure she had just been watching from her window, with its superabundance of animal life and strength, lying full length on the ground, the face with its splendid coloring changed to pallor, and wide-open eyes staring up at the sky. This vision was so vivid that it overwhelmed her with the force of a presentiment.

The minute the Captain had gone, she went back to her loophole. She did not have long to wait, for she had just established herself there when the sound of many hoofs was heard mingled with the clanking of weapons, and a second later a small party of horsemen in the red uniform of her own country rode into the court-yard. Lenore recognized in their leader an officer whom she had seen occasionally at her father's court, Major Rathbon. He rode boldly up to the great

door of the mill, banged on it with the handle of his sword, and demanded admittance in a voice that could have been heard a mile. Then he retreated a few yards. The door of the mill opened and Captain Delorme stepped out on the steps.

“What do you want?” Lenore could hear his words even above the roar of the water.

“We want our Princess, the Princess Lenore of Herzogthum, and by Hell! we’ll have her.” The Captain’s answer did not reach the Princess.

“Fire!” shouted the Major, and a cloud of bullets was poured forth before Delorme could retreat. He staggered back and was received within the heavy door. A fiendish yell accompanied by an answering volley came from the mill. The assailing party fired again and again, but except for breaking the few remaining panes of glass, the good bullets might have been peas from a pea-shooter for all the damage they did to the thick walls, while every shot from within told. The

Major realized this and retreated out of range.

None of this the Princess saw, for she had sunk on the floor in a heap, with hardly enough wits left to wonder if a tragedy had taken place below. She was roused by steps on the stairs and rushed to the landing to see Sergeant Kriegmann and another soldier carrying up a lifeless-looking form.

"We want to bring the Captain up here out of the confusion, Your Highness," the Sergeant said gravely.

"Is he dead?" Lenore asked tremulously.

"No, Your Highness, only fainted. He will come to presently. He was only hit in the arm." Lenore breathed a sigh of relief.

"Put him here," she said, motioning to her own bed. "Louison and I will do anything we can for him."

Still after the men had deposited their burden and departed, she did not call Louison from her beads, but getting a basin of water and a handkerchief, she proceeded herself to bathe Delorme's

forehead. His face was ghostly pale and his eyes half closed, with a lifeless, unnatural look about them, but she saw with thanksgiving that his arm was still bleeding through its bandages. He could not be dead. A minute later he opened his eyes with a look of wonder in them.

"You were shot," she explained, "and the Sergeant brought you up here." In a second he was himself. He started to get up, but the pain in his arm made him feel faint, and he lay back again.

"Are they driven off?" he demanded. "They can't force us here. They would n't be idiots enough to try."

"I will see," replied the Princess, and presently she came back with the news that there was not a redcoat in sight.

"Call Sergeant Kriegmann," he then commanded, and the Princess obeyed as if she had been the last-enlisted soldier.

"They will come back later," he said, when he had listened to the Sergeant's account of how the enemy had consulted awhile and then ridden off. "We must get out of here immediately. We can't

stand a regular siege. Princess, I will not intrude any longer. Help me down stairs, Kriegmann." Lenore began to remonstrate, but the Sergeant, knowing the uselessness of it when the Captain had made up his mind, did what he asked without a word. Delorme grew very pale as he crossed the room, leaning on the Sergeant's shoulder, but he did not utter a sound. He left the Princess with that aching, half-angry, left-out-in-the-cold feeling that women, particularly women accustomed to supremacy, have in moments of active life when danger dethrones them, and, for the time being, they and their charms are thrust into the background with other unimportant things.

She went back to the window, and watched soldiers set out in various directions, evidently with orders to carry out. In half an hour one returned with a big bundle in his arms. A few minutes later, Sergeant Kriegmann came up with the latter, which proved to be two suits of peasants' clothing, and requested the Princess and Louison to put them on im-

mediately, and be ready to leave in ten minutes. They might each take a small bundle of necessaries with them.

"How is Captain Delorme?" the Princess asked anxiously. The Sergeant shook his head.

"He will act as if nothing were the matter with him, Your Highness," he said despairingly.

Fifteen minutes later they set out, the Princess and Louison accompanied by Delorme and half a dozen soldiers. The Sergeant and the rest of the company were to remain at the mill to cover their retreat. Poor Balder had to be detained by force, and the last thing the Princess heard as she left the scene of her captivity were his piteous howls, audible above the roaring of the water. Delorme's arm was hung in a sling, but, as the Sergeant had said, he acted as if nothing were the matter with him. They started on the road towards Herzogthum, much to Lenore's surprise, for she had expected to be taken back to headquarters, and rode for several miles in silence. Occa-

sionally their little party was re-enforced by one of the soldiers whom she had seen leaving the mill an hour or so before, each of whom was questioned eagerly by the Captain, but in such a low voice that she could not catch the drift of their remarks. It was getting dark, and the trees of the forest around them loomed up in such queer shapes that she began to get a little frightened, although she knew she had nothing to fear in any alternative. To her surprise, all through the encounter at the mill and during this ride through the forest in the dusk, she found herself identifying herself with her enemies instead of her friends, and that, in spite of herself, her heart beat for the blue coats instead of the red. She wished now that Captain Delorme's face would not look so set and white, that he would not ignore her so completely, would at least address some commonplace remark to her. Perhaps he was realizing now that she was his enemy, and that what he was suffering now was because of her.

At the end of an hour they halted, and, at the Captain's orders, two of the soldiers looked to the girths of the women's saddles. "We are going up a rough trail, and it would not do to have them turn," he said to the Princess, addressing her for the first time.

They were just about to start on again, Delorme and the two women at the rear, when one of the soldiers in the advance guard shouted out an alarm. A body of armed men was approaching. In a second Delorme had seized the bridle of the Princess's horse with his available hand and, ordering Louison to follow, led the way directly up the steep bank above the road and into the thick forest. The Princess was so startled that she did not even protest. There was very little underbrush, but the ascent was steep, and there was only light enough to distinguish the trees. At first they heard a shot or two and then the firing ceased. Lenore expected to hear pursuers behind them every minute until she remembered that the approaching party could have no

means of knowing that they were in company with the soldiers. Delorme did not speak for a long time, except to remark that there were times when running away was the proper thing to do, but seemed wholly absorbed in finding his way. At last after half an hour's riding they scrambled down a bank into a well defined trail.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed. "I thought I could not be mistaken. This little encounter has changed my plans, Princess," he went on. "I was going to conduct you by a short cut over the mountains to Friedberg, where a large detachment of our army is encamped. I should not dare to do that now, without any escort, so I am going to take you to a little retreat of my own, which I occasionally use when I am out hunting. You see I provisioned it when the war broke out in preparation for some emergency, though I never dreamed I should have the honor of entertaining a princess there. It will take us about an hour more to reach it. I hope it won't tire you too much."

"It won't tire me, but yourself, Captain Delorme, do you think you will be able to stand it?" He took no notice of her question except by an impatient movement of his head, but continued :

"I could not take you to headquarters, as your soldiers went in that direction, so there was very little choice." They rode on in silence through the gathering darkness, the horses, left to their own devices, finding the way themselves. At last Lenore spoke :

"Captain Delorme."

"Yes, Princess."

"Do you really consider us your prisoners still? Don't you think two able-bodied women are a match for a man with his right arm disabled?" Her tone was almost playful. Delorme gave a short laugh. Evidently that side of the question had not struck him.

"But I am armed, Princess, and you are not. Besides, you could never find your way through the forest alone," he protested.

"But can you shoot with your left hand?"

“ I can.”

“ Well, there seems to be plenty of our soldiers around,” the Princess continued.

“ On the other hand, Your Highness is just as likely to fall in with Königreich soldiers, and in this dress you might have difficulty in making them believe that you are the Princess Lenore. Besides, they might not be any too polite to you if they did believe you.”

“ I had n't thought of that. Well, I believe I will go with you after all. Still, it is voluntary. I don't consider myself your prisoner in the least. You could never see to shoot me, it is so dark. Besides——” She was riding beside him, for the trail was a little broader just here and, leaning over, she coolly helped herself to a pistol that hung at his hip. Raoul only laughed.

“ Keep it if you like. You may need it,” he said.

“ If that 's the way you look at it——” the Princess began. “ Anyway, I don't know but that I am more afraid of it than I am of you. You can never tell what

they are going to do. Take it back, please."

"I can't on this side," returned the Captain. "Besides, having taken it, it is only fair you should put it back." He stopped his horse and she restored it to its place.

Her tone, her whole manner, had undergone a change. Delorme could hardly believe it was the same woman who had treated him with scorn the day before, and his spirits rose in spite of the pain in his arm. Lenore, too, felt singularly happy. The dark ride through the forest, the companionship, the element of danger, the shots in the distance, all had excited her strangely. She would not have had it different. Her comfortable bed in her father's palace no longer appeared supremely attractive to her, and the life there seemed unspeakably tame beside that she was now living, for, all at once, all the trials and hardships of the past days were transformed into the most delightful events of her existence. She gave a little laugh to herself as these thoughts ran through her head.

“What is it, Princess?” asked Delorme. He spoke to her now as an equal, Lenore noticed, and his tone was such as one uses to a friend.

“It was just that I was thinking how nice it is,” she answered.

“How nice!” he exclaimed in amazement, and then she realized what she had been saying, and explained:

“I mean the air is so soft and the odor of the pines so sweet, and this little breath of wind is so exciting. It is just enough to blow the hair back from my forehead. I don’t like wind in the daytime, but I love it at night. It suggests all sorts of delicious things, And it is so nice to get away from that old mill and to feel a horse under me again.” Raoul had never heard her speak so before, never let go of herself the least bit in the world, and he laughed, as she had done, from pure pleasure.

“Ah, Princess, do you feel such things, too?” he said, and then a more violent twinge of pain took hold of him, and he had all he could do not to fall off his

horse. "Here we are," he went on a few minutes later, dismounting with difficulty from his horse at a level spot, beyond which the trail appeared to descend. Lenore was on the ground before he could offer to help her. "We shall have to let our horses go. Do you think your maid could unsaddle them? I am afraid I cannot do it."

"I don't know, she can do almost anything; but, at all events, here is somebody who can," and, turning up the flap of Delorme's saddle, she started to loosen the girths in a most professional manner. He was beginning to protest, but she silenced him.

"Sit down!" she ordered. "You are not fit to stand." And a feeling of faintness coming over him, he was glad to lie down on the ground and let her have her way. Louison had been a little behind, and by the time she rode up, the Princess had taken off the saddles and bridles and had hidden them in a clump of bushes. Louison, the imperturbable, did the same to her horse, and the three tired animals

began to graze with neighs of satisfaction.

"Is there any water around here?" Lenore asked.

"Plenty. They will find it for themselves," the Captain answered, suppressing a desire to groan. Rising to his feet with a great effort, he led the way through the trees to the north of the trail with the manner of one who knows exactly where he is going. The Princess picked up her bundle and gave one that had been tied behind Delorme's saddle to Louison to carry.

"I am letting you into one of my greatest secrets," he said to her, as he stopped before a clump of bushes that, in so far as she could make out in the starlight, appeared to be growing out of a huge pile of rocks. "Take hold of my coat, and let Louison take hold of your gown," he continued, as, forcing a way through the thicket with his body, he led them along a narrow passage with solid rock on each side, with which she came in contact more than once. The ground underneath

was covered with loose stones, and every now and then she slipped on one and lost her footing. She would have thought it all a dream if it had not been for the feeling of the cloth her hand grasped and Louison's labored breathing behind her.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE MOUNTAINS.

AT last they came into an open space, with clear starlight overhead and apparently surrounded by tall palisades of rock. A big pile of something was at the farther end of it, and leading the way towards this, Delorme fell on the ground beside it. He had fainted away. The big pile proved to be a heap of brushwood, and, feeling in his pockets until she found some matches, the Princess proceeded to light it. Light was the first necessity. In a second the flames leaped high into the air. Lenore looked around. They appeared to be in an irregular enclosure of about a hundred feet in diameter in its broadest part, and surrounded by high walls of solid rock. Several trees grew in this, and opposite

the fire was a cave, in which she distinguished a heap of dried pine branches and some blankets. Also a quantity of tin cans and boxes. A little spring bubbled out of the rock near by and fell into a basin. The Princess took in these details in one hurried look, and then she turned her attention to the Captain. The deathly look on his face as the firelight shone on it frightened her. Running to the spring, she dipped her handkerchief in the icy water and laid it on his forehead. Louison came out of the cave with a bottle of wine that she had found and a cup, and, breaking off the neck of the bottle, Lenore poured a little into the cup and forced it down his throat. In a minute he opened his eyes.

“Lenore,” he said, wonderingly, trying to raise himself. It was the first time that any man but her father had called her by her name, and a thrill went over her that was most unlike the anger she would have expected herself to feel.

“Lie still,” she said, with a little break in her voice, “Louison is heating some

water and is going to attend to your arm. She knows all about that sort of thing." The Captain had closed his eyes again and lay so still that, except for the strained look in the muscles of his face and an involuntary shiver, she would have thought he had fainted again. When his arm was bandaged, he opened his eyes with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Where did she get the stuff?" he asked in his natural voice.

"Sergeant Kriegmann brought it to me with a roll of linen just as we were about to start, and begged me to take it. He was sure you would never deign to think of it yourself. It seems he knows you." Raoul smiled faintly.

"Kriegmann is an old mollicoddle. You 'd think I was his last baby from the way he treats me."

"Do you think you could eat something?" Lenore suggested. "Louison has been investigating and here she comes."

"I might make a try at it. There were some bread and things tied on behind my saddle, but I believe I left them there."

“Louison brought it along and has opened it. See here what we have.”

It was a miscellaneous meal that Louison set before them. There was only one plate, which was tin, but this did not matter so much, as the Princess had to prepare her companion's food for him. She could have called Louison, but she found it strangely and unexpectedly pleasant to do a service for a fellow-creature. Raoul looked at her intently as she was cutting a piece of bread for him and said seriously in a low voice :

“You need not be afraid, Princess. I shall never presume on your kindness or take advantage of your pity.”

“You do not need to tell me that,” she answered cordially. She herself made a good meal, but Raoul hardly touched anything except a little bread soaked in wine.

“I am afraid you are getting feverish,” said the Princess, and, reaching over in a matter-of-course way, she laid her hand on his forehead.

“Oh, don't bother about me ! I am all

right," exclaimed Raoul. "Louison shall bring me some blankets out of the cave, and I'll go to sleep and sleep it off. You will find a very good bed of pine needles and twigs in there."

"Sleep out here in the dew! I think I see myself letting you. You would be dead before morning. If you won't consider yourself, think how extremely unpleasant it would be for me if such a thing happened." Raoul protested in vain and, feeling too weak for further argument, he finally let Louison help him into the cave and cover him up.

There were numerous little sheltered nooks among the rocks, and Lenore chose one of these for herself and rolled herself up in a pair of blankets. She was too excited to sleep, however, and it was a long time before she fell into a doze, from which she was awakened by the sound of Captain Delorme's voice coming from the cave. At first she thought he was calling some one, but soon decided that he was delirious. Louison had discovered a lantern and this the Princess lit by the remains

of the fire, and, going over to the cave, found him apparently burning up with fever. He had thrown the blankets off and was uttering disconnected words and sentences in which her own name occurred frequently. It was on this account that she did not call Louison, who was sleeping on the ground a little way off. She felt very helpless, but the thought came to her that he ought not to be uncovered in the chill of the early-morning mountain air, so she pulled the blankets over him. Next she put a wet bandage on his forehead, and then she did not know what to do, so she sat there beside him, feeling more thoroughly frightened than she had ever been in her life before. After a little his words subsided into a confused mumble and then he became still. Once he opened his eyes and looked at her, and she fancied there was a gleam of recognition in them until he said to her calmly and distinctly:

“You know you are my wife.” Either he was wholly out of his head or else he took her for some one else. He might

have a wife somewhere, though the possibility had never occurred to her before. To be sure he had never mentioned a wife, but neither had he spoken of his father or his mother, and it was to be presumed that he had them. The one piece of personal information that he had ever given her was that he was a native of Königreich.

He stopped talking after a little, and the Princess awakened Louison to attend to his arm, which apparently was paining him a great deal from the way he tried to tear off the bandages. After a fresh dressing was applied, he seemed to sink into a sort of stupor ; and leaving him under the care of Louison, the Princess went back to her improvised bed. Before she went to sleep again, she had fully convinced herself that Captain Delorme had a wife and, perhaps, a family somewhere. She was awakened by the rays of the sun falling full on her, and the possible Mrs. Delorme was the first thought that came into her head ; but by the common-sense light of day she dismissed it as an absurdity.

Captain Delorme did not seem in the least like a married man. Her next thought was for him, and, going over to the cave, she found him asleep. He seemed less feverish. After she had made as much of a toilet as she could by the spring, she sent Louison off to get some breakfast for them, and sat down to watch by their patient herself. She had discovered some knitting in the pouch-like pocket that completed her costume, and, taking this out, she began to knit on a big gray stocking. Presently she heard a sound from the bed of pine boughs, and, raising her eyes, met those of the Captain with an expression of perfect consciousness in them.

"You are better," she said, leaning over and laying her hand on his forehead. "Yes, you are hardly feverish at all. Louison will come and attend to your arm in a minute, and then you must eat something."

"Have I been out of my head?" he asked. "I have a vague consciousness of a lot of things having happened."

"A little," she answered, trying to make her voice sound perfectly natural. She apparently did not succeed, however, for he looked alarmed, and said uneasily :

"I hope I did n't say anything very dreadful. I hear so much low talk first and last, and they say it all comes out at such times."

"You said nothing distinguishable except one remark about your wife."

"My wife? I have n't any."

"It is strange you should speak of her then," Lenore returned, coldly, feeling a mischievous impulse to tease him by appearing suspicious.

"It must have been a dream-wife then. We poor old bachelors have to console ourselves some way." Lenore had to laugh, the contrast between his words and his fresh, boyish-looking face was so striking. Raoul laughed too as he said :

"You don't look any too old yourself, Princess, in that costume. You have done your hair in the regular peasant style, I see."

"I thought I might as well make up for

the part, and it is very comfortable. I really am very glad to have these clothes. I feel so free and unconfined in them. Besides, the one gown I had at the mill got wet in some way or other and shrank in half a dozen different directions." She turned away to hide the laugh that would get into the corners of her mouth. De-lorme laughed too at the same recollection, and Lenore, being anxious to make a diversion, called Louison to come and dress his arm.

The pain was evidently very great and big drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead as Louison manipulated the bandages. He was grasping the blankets with his left hand, when the Princess slipped her soft slender one into his and said gently, with a sound in her voice that was suspiciously like tears:

"Hold it as tight as you like. You don't hurt me." When Louison turned away, he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it before he let it go.

"I shall never forget this, Princess," he said, lifting his eyes full of gratitude

to hers that were swimming in tears, and turning them quickly away again. "I am not much accustomed to ceremony," he went on a second later, "and if I occasionally forget the proper forms, I hope Your Highness will remember that the respect and reverence are in my heart."

"I don't think you ever treated me with so much deference as since we came here," the Princess answered, trying to speak lightly.

"That is because I am such a contrary fellow," he explained. "I have always felt it, but so long as your manner demanded it, I did not choose to pay it; but since you have treated me less like one of the lower animals, I have felt differently." He laughed a little as he said this; his voice did not sound at all aggrieved.

"I am afraid I treat you too uncere- moniously now," she began, "but when a man is flat on his back and has need of you, you can't be *too* polite, you know. Besides, ceremony and this *mise-en-scène* are too ridiculous a combination. You need not be afraid of offending me, Cap-

tain Delorme. I do not take offence readily, and I do get very tired of formality. Treat me like a human being who has not had the misfortune to be born a princess while we stay here. The deference that a gentleman pays to a woman will satisfy me without any of the forms due to my rank. You need not say 'Your Highness.' Still, it is not necessary to call me 'Lenore,' as you did last night," she added with a smile. The young man did not seem much disconcerted as he answered:

"Did I really?" Then went on: "I wonder how many men there are in the world who would n't be afraid to be delirious. I suppose it is different with women."

"There may be some," Lenore answered, "but I am not of that kind. I know I should be very much distressed at the idea."

"I don't believe you have many sins," Raoul remarked seriously.

"No sins, perhaps, but a great many follies."

"Well," he replied, "I have n't any use

for people who can't commit follies occasionally. They ought to be translated."

"We shall probably never see each other again," the Princess continued, following her own thoughts rather than his words.

"I am not so sure of that," Raoul replied, "but still, as you say, it does n't matter. You may be sure I shall not talk of this little episode. I suppose you can trust Louison," he added.

"It is easy to dispose of her. I will give her money enough to enter a particular convent that she has set her heart upon; and, besides, I don't believe it would ever occur to her to say anything about it. Her thoughts are always busy in the New Jerusalem. Have n't you noticed the rapt expression with which she goes about her work? I am always expecting her to do absent-minded things, but she never does. I don't believe there is much danger of my telling, either," she added.

"I suppose you will tell your husband some day?"

"I shall never have any to tell. I am never going to marry, for good and sufficient reasons."

"I suppose I must n't ask what they are?"

"It would not do you any good if you did, for I most certainly shall not tell you. And now I am going to see what keeps Louison so long with your breakfast," and, pocketing her knitting, the Princess left the cave.

Delorme's wound was not very serious, and it was only a few days before he was able to be up and around, with his arm in a sling.

"I suppose I can't claim to be treated like an invalid much longer," he said one evening when they were seated by the camp-fire.

"It is quite time you were convalescent," said the Princess. "Our stores are nearly gone and there is very little more firewood in here. What do you suppose they think has become of us?" she broke off.

"There are very few people to wonder

what has become of me unfortunately,—old Kriegmann and one other.”

“Is that one a man or a woman?” asked Lenore, for they had grown very friendly while he had been dependent on her.

“A man. There is n’t a woman nearer than Paris who ever thinks about me.”

“Except me,” said Lenore, frankly. “I shall think of you very often, for you are the only man I have ever known intimately.”

“If you only had n’t added the reason,” he said plaintively. “Well, I must n’t be too grasping.”

“I shall always think of you as a friend even if I never see you again,” she continued. “And I suppose it is better not. You must never come to our court, for it would be so hard to be ceremonious and proper, when I should be longing to ask you if you remembered my experiments in cooking, and all the other dear delightful things.”

“Are you sarcastic, Princess?” demanded Delorme.

“Sarcastic? Why, no. I do find it delightful in spite of the drawbacks in the shape of rough-dried clothes and going without a great many of the necessities. It is the sense of freedom that makes it so exhilarating to me. It is the first time in my life that I have ever felt free to be myself, and I find that myself is a gypsy. I should like to live in a tent eight months of the year at least.”

“You would look well in a red kerchief,” Delorme remarked reflectively.

“Still, it is high time it was over,” she continued; “and just as soon as you are well enough, we will start, and when we get out of the forest, Louison and I will either shoot you and make our escape over your dead body, or we will get away by stratagem.”

“Why don’t you take me home with you as your prisoner?” Delorme suggested. The Princess’s eyes lit up.

“Why, we might,” she exclaimed. “I had n’t thought of it before. What a turning of tables that would be.”

“I should be a willing captive,” he said.

“Then I don’t believe I want you,” she replied. “No, Captain Delorme, I will be magnanimous. You shall have your freedom.”

CHAPTER VIII.

PEACE IS DECLARED.

THE next day Delorme felt so much stronger that he went out of their retreat on a little tour of inspection, to see if the roads were safe. He was gone a couple of hours and came back with a loaf of bread under his left arm.

“Some friends of mine live not so very far from here, a wood-chopper and his family,” he explained. “They often used to supply me with provisions when I came here on hunting trips last year. They have agreed to put a basket of things at a place a little way down the trail, and Louison shall go for them. I don’t want them to find out about this place, so I would n’t have them come any nearer,” he added.

“How did you ever discover it your-

self?" asked the Princess. "I have been meaning to ask you ever since we came."

"It was just by accident, when I was out shooting one day. A rabbit ran in here and I followed it. The entrance was all choked up with rubbish, but I cleared it out. You see nobody would ever suspect it was here, as the rocks go up perpendicularly and look like a solid mass."

"How about the roads?" she asked.

"I think we had better wait a few days. My old wood-chopper says there are a great many soldiers about." The Princess did not notice it at the time, but afterwards she remembered that he did not look at her as he made this remark.

The next morning Delorme conducted Louison out of their retreat and told her just where she would find the basket. It was in a place she could not miss. He also gave her strict injunctions not to say anything about her companions or their place of refuge if she should happen to meet any one.

She ought to have been back within

half an hour, but an hour, two hours, passed and no Louison. Raoul made several excursions, each a little longer than the last, but could find no trace of her, although he finally went to the place where the basket was to have been left. It was gone. Next he went to the wood-chopper's hut and found out that it had been left as directed.

"There is nothing for us to do but to wait and see if she does n't turn up," he said to the Princess when he came back the last time.

"I shall stay until dark and then I shall go myself if she does n't return," she answered decidedly. "I shall get your wood-chopper to show me the way. We can't be so far from the boundary line now, and I do not choose to stay here without Louison."

"Don't you trust me?" he asked in a hurt tone.

"Yes, implicitly; but, all the same, I do not choose to stay. I do not like the idea of it."

"Ah, Princess, you are romantic only

in theory," he remonstrated. She did not answer, and he continued: "At all events, there is no use being anxious over what can't be helped. Let us have a happy day since it is to be our last."

"Don't talk about last things; it gives me the blues," she entreated. "I am not going to worry about Louison. Nothing could possibly happen to her. She has probably been taken off by some soldiers because she refused to give an account of herself. But what are you going to do to make your day a happy one?"

"I should n't have to do anything but just exist. Still, as it happens, I am going to lie down on those pine needles where the sun strikes them and put my head in the shade of the tree, and you are coming to sit beside me with your knitting. I love to see you knit; it looks so domestic and makes me forget a thing or two; and, besides, you've got to finish that stocking before we go. You know you promised I should have it."

"One stocking, very badly made, will be so useful."

"It is better than none. Besides, I can use it as a muffler. It would go finely with my full-dress uniform. Or it would do as an antimacassar or a pen-wiper or a teakettle-holder or a sash. In fact, I cannot think of any use to which a stocking might not be put."

"You could n't cook in it," the Princess objected.

"No; but you might strain things through it," and then they both laughed at the nonsense they were talking.

"It is strange," he continued when they had established themselves in the place he had chosen, "It is strange how much nicer it makes it to have Louison gone. Don't you think so?" he asked, as Lenore did not answer.

"Suppose I said I did n't?"

"I should n't believe you. Nobody could like to have that automaton around. She gives me the creeps. But you really don't, do you, Princess?"

"My dear Captain Delorme, I have learned a thing or two since I have been here, and one is not to make remarks to

you that you won't like. You always make me pay for it later. If you can't think of any other way, you do the heavy pathetic and find out that your arm is hurting you until I have to be twice as kind and sympathetic as I want to be. Oh, I know it is all my fault! I have spoiled you dreadfully. You were rather inclined to do the Spartan act at first." Raoul laughed heartily.

"How you do see through me!" he exclaimed. "Your ministers won't have an easy time with you, Princess. The next Duchess is going to have things her own way."

"It will be a great bother," she remarked thoughtfully. "I hate business and diplomacy and all that sort of thing. It seems such a waste of time when you might be reading novels, or lying flat on the ground, looking up at the sky through the branches of a tree. Don't tell," she went on confidentially, "but there are several little retired corners in the park at home where I do that very thing."

"But you get tired of doing even such

delightful things when you have n't any duties," Delorme remonstrated.

"Not if you are a princess and have such a large part of your time taken up with stupid forms and ceremonies. Besides, I drive and ride, and read other things beside novels. But, Captain Delorme," she broke off, "I don't think it is fair. I have told you almost everything there is to tell about myself, and you have told me nothing about you." He turned over on his side so that he faced her, moved his head out of the sun, which had just reached it, and asked :

"What is it you want to know, Princess?"

"A little of everything, if it is n't disagreeable to you."

"Oh! no, not in the least, but there is n't much to tell. My parents died when I was so young that it is not natural for me to talk about them, for I hardly remember them. Let me see. My father was a man with a great quantity of this world's goods, more clever than scrupulous, I regret to say; and when he died,

a cousin of his stepped forward and claimed these goods as his right. Everybody had always known that he ought to have had them, but my father was powerful and had a great deal of influence ; and when he disputed the succession—inheritance, I mean, he had the Archbishop and a great many others to back him up. Well, my father's cousin won his suit and left me without where to lay my head ; for my cousin hated me for being my father's son. Besides, he had a son, and he was afraid of my getting the decision reversed some day. What might have become of me, I cannot tell, if an old friend of my mother's had not adopted me. He took me to England and had me educated there and let me travel and do anything I wanted to. Then we lived in Paris for several years, and when I was tired of being idle, he got me a commission in the *Königreich* army. That is all, Princess, not a very interesting story, is it ?”

“Not as you tell it ; but I have no doubt it was very much so in reality.

You left out all the details and those are what make things interesting. But this property, was it money or land?"

"Both."

"Are you never going to get any of it?"

"Perhaps I shall. It has begun to look like it lately. My cousin's son is very dissipated and is rapidly killing himself, and I am the next heir."

"Who is your cousin? Has he a title? Is he a count or a baron?"

"He is neither. His name is the same as mine."

"That 's too bad," she exclaimed. "I always thought you seemed like a man of high rank."

"You can't always tell," Delorme replied with a laugh. "Is there anything else I can tell Your Highness? My insignificant self feels honored at your interest." The Princess picked up a twig as if she were about to throw it at him; but dropped it immediately, horrified at having even thought of doing such a familiar thing. It was certainly time they left their retreat. Delorme looked at her with

a glance of amused comprehension on his face. He had a provoking little way of divining impulses that never crystallized into actions.

"I don't even know your Christian name," she said abruptly to divert his attention.

"Are you thinking of calling me by it?" he demanded. She gave him a look of scorn, and he continued. "You don't? Why, I know yours perfectly. Lenore, it is a beautiful name."

"It is a most uncommon one," she replied. "I never knew of but one other person who had it."

"There was the Queen of Königreich, of course; and look here," said Delorme as, with some difficulty, he unfastened a locket from his watch chain and handed it to the Princess.

"Am I to open it?" she asked as she took it.

"If you please. I can't do it with one hand." It was an old-fashioned locket of chased gold, and opened with some little difficulty. Within was a picture of a

beautiful young woman with deep dark eyes. Her hair was rather quaintly dressed and her shoulders were framed in a cloud of floating gauze. Below on the rim of the locket was engraved the one word "Lenore."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Princess; then asked a second later, "Then it was not I you meant that time you were out of your head?" Delorme only smiled for answer, and stretched out his hand for the locket; but the Princess refused to give it up.

"Not till you tell me who she is," she declared.

"You will have to keep it then," he replied, putting his watch back in his pocket. "Keep it till I ask you for it."

"Then it is not so very dear to you?" she asked.

"On the contrary, it is my most precious possession except one; still, I should like to have you take care of it for me, Princess."

"Very well," she replied absent-mindedly, sticking it into the bodice of her peasant's gown.

"You have n't told me how you got your name," Delorme went on presently.

"I thought everybody knew. I was named after your Queen Lenore. She was my godmother ; but I was such a little girl when she died that I don't remember her at all. I have always heard that she was a remarkable woman. I have heard my father tell stories of her—But what is the matter ? You look so strangely," she broke off abruptly."

"Only a twinge of pain. There, it is gone now. Go on, Princess. Are there any more questions you want to ask me ?"

"I asked you one and you did not answer it."

"My christian name, you mean ? It is Raoul. I am surprised you did n't know. You surely have n't been thinking of me as Captain Delorme all this time ?"

"I never think of people by their names at all," she answered. "People in novels are always saying, 'I always think of you as Mary or John,' so I suppose some people do do it, but I never do."

“I suppose they mean that their way of thinking of their friend is of the degree of intimacy at which you call people by their christian names. Yet how do you account for the fact that people in excitement or delirium, let us say, use names that they would never dare to use ordinarily?”

“Then it was n’t that other Lenore?” demanded the Princess. Raoul only smiled provokingly, and instead of answering, asked if they were n’t going to have anything to eat that day? He, for one, was starved.

“There is very little to have,” replied Lenore. “But you can have what there is,—one bottle of beer, some very stale biscuits, and a little cheese, besides the rest of the bread you brought.”

“And you scorn those delicacies? My dear girl——” He interrupted himself abruptly, and said most humbly: “I beg your pardon, Princess. I forgot myself.”

“Never mind,” she said graciously. “Can you really make something good out of those things?” Under his directions, she cut up the cheese into the small-

est possible pieces, spread it evenly on the biscuits, then toasted them and her cheeks at the same time over some live coals which Delorme resurrected from under the ashes of their fire.

"Now tell the truth, did you ever taste anything nicer?" he asked when their feast was spread out on a flat rock that they used for a table.

"Never!" she answered emphatically. "Dear me, how hungry I am. I should be very glad of the crumbs that fall from my father's table, and I spend half my time thinking about things to eat. I'll eat them out of house and home when I get back."

"And that will be to-morrow," said Raoul. "You don't seem to realize how soon your captivity will be over, Princess."

"I don't want to," she answered soberly. "It is probably the one taste of freedom I shall ever have, and I don't want it to come to an end too quickly." Her companion sighed heavily and lost himself in a fit of abstraction. They neither of them felt very happy as the afternoon

wore away without Louison and the hour for parting came nearer and nearer.

"Why not wait till to-morrow," Delorme suggested once. "Nobody will ever know, and you know you don't mind me."

"No, indeed," she answered decidedly. "I will wait till twilight and not a second later. What are you going to do?" He stared at her.

"Did you actually think I was going to let you go home alone, Princess?"

"But there might be danger for you."

"I'll risk it," he answered, with a laugh that she did not understand.

When the shadows grew longer, Lenore took the needles out of her finished stocking, handed it to Raoul without a word, and, going over to the cave, brought out the last bottle of wine and a loaf of bread and set them on the rock.

"Supper is ready," she said, speaking for the first time.

"It seems like a sacrament," Delorme said soberly, and, lifting his glass and looking her straight in the eyes, he drank to her silently.

"Ah, Princess," he said, "if you knew what these days have been to me!"

"I think you had better not tell me," she answered in a low voice, without looking at him; and getting up, she went into the cave again. When she came out, a moment later, she had a small bundle in her hand.

"I am ready," she said quietly. Raoul rose to his feet without a word, and led the way through the curving passage with its rock walls, through the dense thicket in front of it, out into the world beyond. It was not yet dark and there was a little new moon overhead. They walked down the trail in the gathering darkness. Once the Princess stumbled over a root, and he reached out and took her right hand in his left one.

"I know every foot of the way," he said; then went on as she tried to draw it away: "What does it matter? It is the last time. Forget for once that you are a princess as well as a woman."

At last they came into the highway and turned their faces to the east. In

about an hour they reached the frontier; and there, in front of the military station on the other side of the line, to Lenore's astonishment, they saw a group of blue-coated soldiers talking with a group of red ones. They were standing in a broad band of light from an open door.

"What do you suppose it means?" she demanded of Delorme, whom she had tried in vain to persuade to leave her.

"Perhaps peace has been declared," he replied. His voice sounded unnatural to her, and just at that moment a light was flashed full on their faces, and she saw an expression on his that roused her suspicions. They made a pretty picture, standing there with the wide stream of light falling full on them, she in her peasant's gown, and he in his blue uniform, with one empty sleeve and an arm in a sling. Still, their personal appearance was the last thing in the world that either of them was thinking of at that moment.

"You knew?" she demanded in a low voice, taking no notice of the sentry's challenge.

“Yes, I knew,” he answered defiantly, holding up his head, and looking her straight in the eyes.

“When did it happen?”

“Four days ago.”

“And how long have you known?”

“Since yesterday.”

“Speak or I’ll shoot!” came a voice from the sentry-box. The soldiers had ridden up, and they all heard her answer:

“It is I, Lenore, your Princess.” A deafening shout went up from both redcoats and bluecoats, and under cover of the confusion, Delorme disappeared in the darkness. It was thus that the parting took place which both had dreaded so much.

Several officers came running out of the houses around, and, rushing up to Lenore, seized her hand and kissed it, while they besieged her with questions.

“We had begun to think Your Highness must be dead,” said the Colonel in charge of the post. “We lost all track after Your Highness left the mill.”

“I was taken off in the mountains just

after the mill was attacked, and kept there, although I was treated with the utmost consideration. My maid was with me until this morning, when they let her go, and to-day I was set free too. One of the Königreich soldiers showed me the way here. He seems to have disappeared. I should have liked to give him something," the Princess explained, making use of a little duplicity.

"I suppose he was afraid of consequences," said the Colonel. "The Duke is most indignant as well as beside himself with anxiety. You may be sure they will be properly punished. And now I will send for a carriage for Your Highness, and escort you to the palace immediately. I am sorry we have no clothes for Your Highness," he added, with a glance at her costume.

"This will do very well," she answered indifferently. "There will be no one to see me."

In a few minutes she was driving rapidly towards the Capital, the Colonel in the seat opposite her. He was evidently full

of curiosity about her adventures, so she pretended to go to sleep. It was late when she alighted in the courtyard of the Palace, but the news spread like wildfire over the building, and in an incredibly short space of time the corridors were crowded with attendants and lords and ladies-in-waiting, anxious to welcome the Princess, and to learn what could have detained her four days after peace was declared. The Duke was just about to get into bed; but he could not wait till Lenore came to him, but rushed out of his apartments clad in dressing-gown and slippers, divided between his joy at having her back again uninjured and indignation against the ruffians who had detained her. His anger gave her a valuable suggestion. She had been much disturbed as to how she was to evade the cross-questioning that was sure to await her without arousing suspicions; but now she said as soon as the Duke was composed enough to listen to her:

“Father, I have had nothing but kindness and consideration from these people,

and if it means that they are to be punished, I won't tell a thing for fear you will discover who they are"; and from this position she refused to move, in spite of commands and entreaties. She even took advantage of his delight to obtain from him a promise that no further complaint should be made to the King of Königreich, but that the matter should be allowed to drop. One of the terms of the treaty had been, she discovered, the restoration of the Princess in good health, and when the time agreed upon had passed and she had not appeared, the Duke had sent an embassy to Königreich, demanding the reason for the delay in any but polite words. This had been followed by another that very day.

Lenore did not know this, but General Malakoff had been at his wits' end. He had pledged his word to the King for the reappearance of the Princess when wanted, knowing that she was safe somewhere under Delorme's care. As the days went by, and he could get no news of either of

them, he became very nervous. The peace was signed, a measure he was most anxious for for reasons of his own, and, within a short time, was followed by messengers from the Duke, demanding his daughter, and threatening to renew hostilities immediately. Malakoff had used all the diplomatic arts he knew to get a moment's delay while he scoured the country; and at the time of the Princess's arrival at the palace, he was lying wide-awake, fully dressed, on his narrow soldier's bed, cursing Delorme and himself, and trying in vain to think of some possible place where they might be hiding. It showed his confidence in Delorme, that he never for one moment believed that he had left the country with the Princess. If for no other reason, he would never put his country in such a predicament.

It was getting light when he heard the clatter of hoofs in the paved yard outside, and in a minute some one was demanding admittance at his door.

"Come in," called the General, jumping to his feet and recognizing immediately, in

spite of the faint light, the tall blue-coated figure that stood in the doorway with an arm in a sling.

"Where is the Princess?" he demanded eagerly, without any preliminaries.

"Safe in her father's palace by this time," Raoul answered calmly. The General sank back on his bed.

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed fervently; and then he began to scold the young man and to ask him twenty questions all in the same breath, in a manner most unlike his usual impassive one. The General had seldom been so disturbed about anything in his life before.

"And do you mean to say you never told her?" he asked at last when Raoul had finished his story, having by this time forgotten his anger in his delight at having his boy back again.

"I never even hinted at it," Raoul answered. "You don't really know her, General. It would have done no good—probably harm. Everything has to be open and above-board with the Princess Lenore. Besides, I should have had to

tell her who I was to make it seem credible." The General sighed.

"How times have changed!" he exclaimed. "Any man who behaved as you did would, in my young days, have been called a milksop; but—damn it, Raoul—no man could call you that." His companion only laughed.

"I'm dead beat," he said wearily. "Is there a bed I can have, General? It seems years since I slept in one. And I'll shoot any man that wakes me up, if it be the Commander-in-chief himself."

"All right," said the General. "You can have Courtenay's room. He is at Friedberg."

The Princess spent the next few days eating and sleeping. After that she began to come to life a little. Louison had turned up the day after her own arrival. She had met a party of Königreich soldiers a little way down the trail; and because of her refusal to give an account of herself, together with the discrepancy between her dress and her dialect, she had been taken to the military post at Fried-

berg, and thence, a day later, to headquarters, where Captain Delorme had identified her, and General Malakoff had sent her home immediately with an escort and many apologies.

The Duke was extremely annoyed at his daughter's refusal to give any details of her captivity ; but, as physical compulsion was out of fashion, he had to submit. The reason she gave for refusing seemed so plausible that only one or two of the most inveterate of the gossips around the court found anything suspicious about it ; and even these had whispered about it only for a short time, when an event took place that put everything else out of their minds. The Crown Prince of Königreich died very suddenly. Heart-failure, the court physicians called it, though the world at large gave it a different name. Now the Crown Prince was the only child and the King was very feeble. Who was to succeed him ? This question was answered a week after the funeral by the official announcement that Prince Karl, first cousin once removed of the King,

had arrived from Paris, where he had been living, had been received at the palace and publicly recognized as the heir presumptive to the throne. This important event was followed in a short time, as one of the court ladies took great credit to herself for having predicted, by an embassy from the King to beg the hand of the Princess Lenore for Prince Karl, his cousin and heir.

CHAPTER IX.

ROYAL INTERVIEWS.

TWO months after her return, the Princess Lenore was sitting by the window of her private sitting-room, her hands in her lap, apparently doing nothing but look out of the window, a dreamy expression, half sad, half happy, on her face. She sat there so long that she lost track of time and place, and was considerably startled when a page threw open the door and announced :

“The Duke, Your Highness.” Lenore rose quickly to her feet.

“This is very surprising,” she said.

“I wanted a little talk with you,” her father began nervously.

“You should have sent for me,” said the Princess.

“I thought I would come here ; it is

pleasant, and we are more likely to be undisturbed." There was no denying it. The Duke was very nervous. He was always a little afraid of this daughter of his, but never so much as when she set her will in opposition to his, as was the case in regard to the subject of his visit. He looked around for a diversion and saw a small gold object, apparently a locket, at his feet. He stooped and picked it up. The Princess, whose eyes had strayed out of the window again, turned them in time to see him do it.

"My locket. Let me have it, please, Father," she exclaimed. He started to give it to her, but it opened in his hand and disclosed the face at which she had been looking a moment before.

"Why, where did you get this?" he demanded. "I did n't know we had a picture of her."

"Who is it?" asked Lenore, in her turn, as eagerly as the Duke.

"Don't you know?"

"I have n't the remotest idea, except that her name is Lenore."

"It is your godmother, Queen Lenore of Königreich, and a splendid likeness. She looked just like that the first time I saw her. She was only a poor little princess then. If only she had n't married that brute of a fellow," and the Duke gave a sigh.

"Are you sure?" asked the Princess. Her father stared at her.

"Of course I am. How strangely you asked that, Lenore. Where did you get it?" he demanded suspiciously.

"It was given me. I would rather not say by whom, now that I know of whom it is a likeness. I had n't an idea of it." She looked him straight in the eye, and the Duke did not have the courage to persevere in his inquiries, but said instead:

"I should think you might have guessed. Lenore is such an unusual name."

"I might have," she answered slowly. "But, strange to say, it never occurred to me."

"I can't imagine where it came from,

if it was any one around the palace who gave it to you," the Duke went on. "It could n't have been among your mother's things. She was not any too fond of Lenore, and there would have been no reason for her having so beautiful a picture of her. Besides, I should have known about it. Let me have it, Lenore. You do not care for it."

"Indeed I do. It is a beautiful picture, as you say, and I like having her name. No, Father, it is mine."

This little episode had aroused so many memories in the Duke that it made him forget his nervousness to such an extent that he plunged immediately into the subject that had brought him to his daughter's apartments, instead of leading up to it by degrees.

"Prince Karl is her son, you know," he said abruptly. Lenore's face took on a hard, stony expression.

"You are not going to begin on that again?" she demanded impatiently.

"You must come to reason," her father replied. "It is the only thing to be done

if we are to secure permanent peace, and another war would ruin us. Our treasury is exhausted now, and the soldiers are demanding their pay. If you marry the Prince, the question of Mitlachen is settled at once without any loss of dignity on either side, and Königreich will remit the indemnity, which will give plenty of money for everything."

"It seems to me that I have heard this once or twice before," the Princess replied indifferently, looking out of the window again, and evidently much absorbed in something foreign to the subject they were discussing. The Duke lost his temper.

"You are a selfish, heartless girl," he exclaimed.

"Father," Lenore said reprovingly, and her voice calmed him, as it always did.

"There is an especial reason why this marriage is strictly appropriate," he went on more quietly. "There are considerations on account of which I have not cared to tell you of it before, but if I thought it would weigh with you——"

he paused and the Princess interrupted him :

“It is no use, Father. If you proved to me conclusively that this marriage was made in heaven, I should not consent. I realize perfectly that *noblesse oblige*, that I cannot marry a man of my own choosing ; but neither will I marry one selected for me by ministers of state. Why can I not be a virgin ruler, like Elizabeth ? Oh, do let us stop this eternal discussion that leads nowhere ! Once for all, I will not marry a man to order.”

“If you would only see him,” protested the Duke. Lenore shook her head, and the Duke, figuratively speaking, threw up the sponge and left the arena. It was what he had to do eventually in every one of his encounters with his daughter. He had known perfectly well what the result would be before he entered the room ; but his advisers had insisted on one more attempt.

He had had one argument, known only to himself, that he had kept as a last resource ; but he had concluded the inter-

view without using it, though he had once started to do so. He congratulated himself on this reserve when he returned to his own apartments. He had no confidence that anything in heaven or earth would move Lenore when she had once made up her mind, and the explanation that would have been necessary would not have shown him up in a favorable light. He could imagine Lenore demanding scornfully why he had not told her when he was proposing other alliances to her, and if he really had intended to keep it secret, supposing events had not turned out exactly as they had; and the Duke was guiltily conscious that he had intended to do that very thing.

In the meanwhile, Delorme's life had been as eventful as the Princess's had been quiet. At the close of the war the headquarters of the army had been moved back to the capital, and it was here that he was living, in General Malakoff's house. His arm had healed rapidly, and as soon as he could discard his sling, the General had put him on his own

personal staff, a position that he had held before being placed in charge of the Princess.

One night after dinner he had left his companions and was wandering around the garden in the twilight, smoking a cigarette, and thinking some thoughts that evidently pleased him, judging by the smile on his face, when one of his brother officers came hurrying towards him with the news that the General wanted to see him immediately. Delorme's spirit was so far away from his body that it took him a second or two before he realized what was being said to him. He found General Malakoff in his private office, impatiently walking up and down.

"Oh, there you are," he exclaimed as Raoul entered. "Shut the door. I have a piece of news for you. The Crown Prince is dead." Delorme turned pale.

"Really?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; he died an hour ago. I just received word by a special messenger. I knew he had been off on another spree

and was suffering from the consequences. Now we shall have to make up our minds how to act."

"There will be no need to take any steps until after the funeral," Delorme suggested.

"Probably not ; still it is just as well to be prepared. It is the opportunity we have waited for all these years, my boy," and he laid his hand on Delorme's shoulder.

"Poor fellow," remarked the latter. "I don't suppose he was to blame, if we knew the truth of the matter. There was weakness in every line of his face, and I don't suppose he was ever taught to control himself. I tell you what, General, I am convinced that it was a very fortunate thing for me that I have had to experience the uses of adversity. I don't believe one man in a million can make a successful fight against the temptations of being first, when it is not his own merits that have made him so."

"I know one man who could have," said the General, suggestively.

"I am not so sure of that. I don't think

wine would have been the danger in my case, but women would have been ; and you know you have always said I was rather too fond of having my own way, even in my present circumstances."

"Rather," exclaimed the General ; then went on : " Well, think it over. I must be going to the palace. I wonder how the King is taking it. If he had another son, I fancy it would be a relief to him. Still, his attitude will have to regulate ours. I will send for you when I get back."

The Crown Prince was buried with as much pomp and ceremony as if his had been the most desirable head for a kingly crown to rest on. There was no real grief, however ; for his mother was dead, and his excesses had long ago worn out his father's patience. The King was a delicate, ascetic man, with little sympathy for the sins and follies of youth,—a student rather than a man of the world. The evening after the funeral, he was sitting in his library in a swing chair in front of a table, a large folio in front of him, which

he was not reading, when a page entered and announced General Malakoff.

"Show him in," said the King, "and see that we are not interrupted for any cause whatsoever." He swung slowly around as the door opened to admit the General, followed by a young man in the uniform of an officer of his staff. They both bowed low, and the General waited until the page had withdrawn before he said :

"Here is the Prince, Your Majesty."

The King rose slowly and painfully and motioned to the young man to come nearer, until the light of a hanging lamp fell full upon him. Then he signalled to him to stop.

"You do not look in the least like your father," he said at length after he had taken a prolonged survey of him. Then continued : "General Malakoff tells me that you have been in my army for two years and have not disclosed your identity to a single one of my subjects. Is that so?"

"It is, Your Majesty," Raoul answered composedly.

"You have not made any attempts on

the throne then. Will you honor me with your reasons?"

Raoul flushed a little, hesitated, then answered quietly :

"Your Majesty, I do not like to say anything that will reflect on my father; but I must acknowledge, once for all, that I never had any doubts as to who was the rightful claimant to the throne."

"And you did not let your ambition govern your beliefs? You are a most remarkable young man." The sarcasm in the King's voice was irritating, and Raoul lost his temper. His eyes flashed.

"I have never set myself up as a model," he was beginning, when a warning glance from the General silenced him. The King looked from one to the other, evidently understanding the feelings of both, and apparently not at all displeased at Raoul's flash of temper. The late Crown Prince could be insulted with perfect safety by any one, from his father to the latest ballet girl to whom he gave his royal protection.

"You don't think my cousin Henry,

your father, was in the right then?" he asked in a less ungracious manner.

"No, Your Majesty, I do not. I think he was altogether in the wrong. His claim had nothing to stand on except the power to enforce it. I have always thought so ever since I was old enough to know anything about the matter, and it is this consideration alone that has made me keep myself in the background."

"Well, then, Cousin Karl,—your name is Karl, I believe?"

"Karl Raoul Louis, Your Majesty," put in the General. The King took no notice, but continued :

"You know, I suppose, that I cannot prevent the throne from going to you when I am dead? You are certainly the rightful heir when I am out of the way. You won't have to wait long. I have heard two of the three knocks. I thought the third had come a week ago, but it seems I am yet to live and to suffer. Still, I really do not see why I should have you under my eyes for the little time I have left to live, the son of my greatest enemy,

of the man who, while he pretended to be my friend, was secretly working against my interests, and who, on the death of our great uncle, quietly took possession of all that should have been mine, keeping me out of it all those years when I might have enjoyed it, before disease had laid hold of me and turned my court into a hospital." There was not a trace of excitement in the King's voice as he said these words. Evidently he could no longer feel his wrongs, only think them. "That was not the worst," he went on after a second's pause. "He wronged me in a way of which I do not dare let myself think." Sinking back into his seat, he gazed across the room at a picture on the opposite wall with his far-seeing eyes, evidently forgetting his companions and everything except the past that a life of suffering had made seem so far behind, for he was not an old man, except in his infirmities. Raoul had an impulse, and he acted on it. He moved forward and stood in front of the King's chair with bowed head.

“My cousin,” he said, “I should not want to stay near you if the sight of me were painful to you ; but you say I do not look like my father, and I tell you I am not like him. I feel his wrongs towards you as keenly as you can do. Will you not let me make atonement for them to you, in so far as a man can? I will be a son, a good son to you. I will relieve you from many cares that your health must make you find oppressive. I will do everything in my power to make you feel that there is at least one service that my father has done you.” The King looked at him intently ; then said with more eagerness than he had shown at any time during the interview :

“You are in earnest? You will never forget that I am the rightful King? You swear that?”

“If you are not convinced of my honesty already, no swearing will do any good. A villain never minds breaking an oath,” Raoul answered calmly.

“True,” the King replied shortly ; then went on, as if to himself : “His mother

was a just, virtuous woman, why should he not be that rarity, an honest man?" He rose to his feet with some difficulty, laid one of his trembling hands on each of Raoul's broad shoulders, then said: "Karl, I believe you. I have always been accustomed to trust my own judgment of men,—since that one hard lesson taught me to know the tracks of the cloven hoof. Your eyes are honest and I like your face. You shall have the chance you wish. As I told you, I have not long to live; but if you can make that little time any easier to me, I shall be glad." Raoul took the trembling hands in his and kissed them.

"How strong you are and how warm-blooded," the King said, almost enviously, as Raoul put his arm around him and helped him back to his chair.

"I have strength for myself and to spare," he answered gently.

This weak, trembling figure of the man whom his father had wronged so greatly, touched him more than he would have believed possible, although he had pitied

him for his sufferings and the disappointment which his son's career had been to him. He had admired him, too, for his uprightness and justice, his unwavering choice of things that were of good report, his simplicity and lack of ostentation, and, above all, for the keen, well-balanced intellect that, in spite of his advisers, never lost sight of the true welfare of his country. He had admired him for his virtues and pitied him for his misfortunes, but now he felt a sentiment that was neither the one nor the other of these in his heart. It had never occurred to him that he might feel real affection for his cousin.

The King looked very pale as he sank back into his chair, but a smile was on his lips.

"You may go now," he said to Raoul, "I will see you again in the morning. I wish to speak to General Malakoff for a few minutes now." The young man bowed and withdrew, and the King motioned to the General, who had retreated into the background while this

conversation was going on, to come nearer.

“Is he genuine?” he asked anxiously.

“As the crown jewels,” answered the General. “I did not wish to tell Your Majesty much about him till you had seen him and could judge for yourself; but he has been with me since his father died, and he has been the joy and comfort of my life. He is brave and honest. He has only one real fault that I know of, a quick temper. It takes very little to make him flash out with things that had better be left unsaid, but he gets over it just as quickly.” He stopped, but the King looked up at him with a look of such unusual interest that he continued: “He never forgets an old friend, and never lets his personal wishes influence his convictions. I will not deny that before I took service with Your Majesty, I tried to stir him up to a sense of what he had lost. He was only eighteen then; but he looked into the question for himself and came to the conclusion that it was his father who had been the usurper,

and he could not be moved from that position. I am not too proud to confess that he has taught me a great deal."

"What are his habits?" asked the King.

"He has no bad ones. He cares almost nothing for drinking, and women who are not refined and well-bred never influence him. He is devoted to horses and dogs and hunting, and is a born soldier. He is too active to care very much for books, but he has a vast amount of clear, practical common-sense. I am sure Your Majesty will have reason to bless this day for the rest of your life."

"Perhaps," the King answered slowly. "I was very much drawn to him. I liked his simplicity and his lack of servility. I wish he were really my son—if he is what he seems. It is hard for me to believe in any one who owns Henry for a father," he added.

"But there was his mother," the General interposed gently.

"True," remarked the King; and then there was silence between them for the

space of five minutes, after which the King came back to the present again and dismissed his companion.

Within a week Raoul was formally and publicly acknowledged heir presumptive to the throne of Königreich under the title of Prince Karl, which, for reasons of state, had seemed the best one of his three names for him to adopt, although he had always been known as Prince Raoul in his father's lifetime. There had never been a Raoul on the throne, and there had been three Karls, and the King preferred that he should be the fourth of that name. The King's impressions of his heir continued to be favorable. Indeed it would have been hard for any one not to make friends with Raoul. He had a natural, easy, friendly manner that was very prepossessing, and it was not long before he won the hearts of all around the court who had hearts to win. He set about learning his new duties immediately under the King's tuition, and delighted him by his application and interest, as well as his quickness at understanding. He

had spent so many fruitless hours with his son in the same employment. Raoul's service under General Malakoff had made him familiar with everything pertaining to military matters, and he had always studied the political history of his own country, as well as that of others, with a great deal of interest, so all that was left to teach him was the daily routine. It was not long before the King realized that he was growing to depend more and more on his young cousin, and the idea did not displease him. He had never had any one on whom he could depend before.

One lovely warm afternoon he was sitting in the window of his library, which overlooked the park, thinking what a comfort it was that he no longer had to attend to certain tedious duties of state, and could sit there in idleness with a comfortable conscience, when he saw Raoul ride up the avenue between the trees with Balder running beside him. The King admired the erect soldierly carriage, and a thought that had been in his mind many times in the past few weeks came to him

again, and, summoning a page, he told him to desire that the Prince come to him immediately.

The young man came in unattended, and, stooping down, took the King's weak hand in his strong one.

"And how is my cousin, the King, to-day?" he asked affectionately.

"Fairly well," answered the King. "I am enjoying the open windows and the sunlight on the trees. You have been to ride?"

"Yes," replied Raoul, seating himself on the window-seat. "I was so stiff from sitting so long in that old council that I took a ride. I stopped at the General's on my way back," and here he began to laugh.

"What is it?" asked the King, laughing a little too. Raoul's laugh was very infectious.

"Nothing, only he called me 'Your Highness.' He has been trying to nerve himself up to it."

"And what did you do?" the King asked in a tone of interest.

“Oh, I just took him by the throat and stretched him full-length on the billiard table, and told him that was what he had to expect every time he did it, and if there did n't happen to be a billiard table, the floor would do.” The King laughed again, an accomplishment that he had learned since Raoul came to him. The laugh was a little rusty, and had struck his own ear strangely at first, but he was getting used to it.

“I don't think he will do it again,” he said ; then went on : “I have been thinking of you as I sat here this afternoon, Raoul.”

“Yes ?” answered Raoul, who was Karl only in public.

“I was thinking it was time you got married. I should like to see you with an heir before I die.”

“Have you selected the lady?” asked the Prince.

“I was thinking of the Princess Helena.” Raoul shook his head. “Why not ?” the King demanded. “What do you object to in her ?”

“Do you have to go so far from home?” Raoul inquired suggestively. A gleam of comprehension came into the King’s face as he said :

“Oh, you mean Lenore. Are you thinking of her?”

“Indeed, I think of nothing else, night and day,” returned the Prince.

“Have you ever seen her?” demanded the King.

“Have I?” exclaimed Raoul. He paused for a second, then went on quietly : “There is an old mill in the mountains a few miles this side of the frontier, where a certain Princess was imprisoned once for over a month, and her jailer was a certain Captain Delorme, of whom you may have heard.”

“Oh !” exclaimed the King in amazement. “I have n’t heard a word of this. It was Malakoff’s doing, I suppose.”

“It was, God bless him,” and Raoul bowed his head reverently. The King laughed softly to himself as he asked :

“And she?”

“She is a woman who never forgets

that she is a princess," was the reply. "Still, I am not afraid," and he straightened himself up with a pride that became him.

"She did not suspect who you were then?"

"Indeed, she did not, and she shall not do so until she forgets for a minute that she is a Princess. It will be a pleasant thought to us both all our lives. Besides, why should I lose the pleasure of winning a wife for myself? I could n't do anything then," he went on. "It did not seem the right thing; but now that she is in her father's palace——" He paused abruptly.

"But how are you going to see her?" asked the King, evidently intensely interested in this little romance.

"That is my secret," said the Prince, and he could not be persuaded to reveal any more.

"Still, it would not do any harm to demand her hand formally for Prince Karl," he went on a little later. "It is on this very account that the General and I have

been so careful not to let Captain Delorme's identity with that person get out. He has removed all my old comrades and soldiers to Friedberg and intends to keep them there until this affair is settled. They 'll wonder why they are kept so short of leave," and Raoul laughed a little to himself. "I have been anxious to tell Your Majesty this," he said finally, "for I wanted to get a little leave of absence myself."

"All you like, my dear boy," replied the King. "And now if you will help me to the couch, I will take a little nap before it is time to dress for dinner. May luck go with you!" he added, holding the young man's hand with a kindly expression in his eyes when he had been comfortably settled among the cushions.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT THE PARROT SAID.

THE afternoon following this conversation, the Princess Lenore was sitting in the park that lay to the west of her father's palace. A book was in her lap, but she was not reading. It had been a glorious sunshiny day, too warm for any greater exertion than just existing, and her thoughts had been wandering as usual back to her stay in the mountains, whose tops, surrounded by a haze of deepest violet, she could see through a gap in the trees in front of her, lying peacefully in the level rays of the late afternoon sun. She had just reminded herself that if it were freedom only she longed for so intensely, she had it that moment when there was not an attendant within a quarter of a mile and

the dinner hour was still a long distance off. To be sure, there were guards on the outside of the park walls, but she could neither see nor hear them. "Still it is only the semblance, not the reality," she was saying to herself, when the crackling of twigs made her look up and she saw the man who had been in her thoughts coming over the grass and bracken towards her.

"Captain Delorme!" she exclaimed, jumping to her feet in astonishment.

"Well, Princess," he replied in the easy, friendly little way she remembered so well. Nobody else had ever used it toward her.

"How did you get in?" she demanded.

"Are n't you going to let me kiss your hand?" he asked plaintively, taking no notice of her question. The Princess extended her hand.

"If I had known you were coming, I'd have washed it," she remarked with a smile, feeling that she ought to be dignified and unapproachable, but finding it impossible in the sudden rush of happi-

ness that had come over her. "Won't you sit down?" she went on, trying not to laugh from sheer content.

"Is this one of those favorite spots of yours?" he asked when they had seated themselves in the shade of a huge oak.

"One of many. But, Captain Delorme, you have n't told me how you got in."

"And I don't mean to," he replied, smiling at her. "Tell me instead if you are glad to see me?"

"I shall have to think about it," returned the Princess. "You know it is not wise to commit yourself to statements that you have to live up to. Oh, dear—" she broke off abruptly.

"What is it?" he asked. She looked at him for a second, then said:

"I had forgotten I was angry at you." Raoul looked as if he wanted to laugh, but suppressed the inclination and said humbly:

"And I was forgetting that I owed you an apology. Can you forgive me, Princess? The temptation is my only excuse."

"First I want to ask you something. Will you promise to tell me the truth?"

"I certainly will not tell you an untruth. I may refuse to answer at all."

"If you do, I shall know you did it."

"What is it?" he demanded anxiously as she paused. She hesitated a little, then asked :

"Did you have anything to do with Louison's disappearance that day? Did you know anything whatsoever about it beforehand?" An expression of relief crossed his face as he asked :

"Is that all? You frightened me. I thought some of my sins were going to be dragged to light. No, on my honor. It was as great a mystery to me as it was to you until she turned up at headquarters. Do you believe me?"

"Of course," she answered with a sigh of relief.

"Then I am forgiven?"

"I forgave you for that long ago. There is nothing dishonest in a little suppression of facts. It was this other thing that was troubling me. I am so glad,"

she added naïvely ; and then a silence fell between them while they took a long look at each other and smiled their pleasure at being together again.

“ I thought the peasant’s dress was becoming, but I believe I like this better,” Raoul said at length, touching a fold of her light summer gown with the tip of his finger. “ You look very much more imposing, though more grown up. I shall not forget myself and take liberties with my Princess now.”

“ They were never very great ones, only a little unceremonious way of talking to me, which, I regret to say, was anything but disagreeable to me. One gets tired of being on a pedestal ; the attitude is so cramped. But how is your arm ? What can I have been thinking of not to ask about it before.” He stretched it straight out in front of him.

“ It is as good as new. It never was much of a wound, though I suppose it would have been troublesome if it had n’t had such good care at first, thanks to you, Princess.”

"To Louison, you mean. And how is Balder?"

"Very well, and he sent you his best love; no, now I think of it, it was humble duty. Kriegmann had taken splendid care of him."

"And how is my friend the Sergeant?"

"I don't know. I have n't seen him for a couple of months. He is at Friedberg with the rest of the company. I have had a staff appointment."

"You have n't asked after Louison," she continued.

"I don't want to know. She was a dreadful nuisance."

"That's gratitude. Well, I want to tell you anyway. She is now a novice, telling her beads in a cell, and anxiously looking forward to the time when she shall be a nun. I have no doubt she prays for both you and me every day."

"Well, it won't hurt either of us," Raoul said calmly.

"I never saw you in civilian's clothes before, and I can't make up my mind

whether I like it or not," the Princess remarked a minute later.

"You would n't have had me come in uniform?"

"No, indeed, It is dangerous enough as it is. Do you know what would happen to you if you were caught trespassing in the park?"

"I can guess," he answered, with a smile of lazy content.

"And what do you suppose would happen to me in that case? We have some terrible gossips around the court, and they don't like me any too well as it is."

"They would probably like you twice as well if the intrigue which they would suspect were a fact. I am afraid you are too good for a court atmosphere, Princess."

"Do you think I am so very, very good?" she demanded anxiously.

"I think you are very high-minded and that you don't forget yourself easily enough for my taste,—not but that I admire you for it," he added quickly.

"You don't think I am prudish then?"

"Not in the least."

"I am so glad. A great many people do, because I won't listen to indecent scandal ; but that is n't the reason. It is only that I dislike the intimacy of talk that has to be carried on with lowered voices." Another delicious pause happened, and then Raoul asked abruptly :

"And how about Prince Karl?"

"What about him?" asked the Princess, demurely.

"Are you going to be my future Queen?"

"No, I am not," she answered decidedly.

"May I ask why not?"

"I have told you more than once that I never intend to marry."

"You are making a mistake, I think," he remarked calmly, much to her astonishment. "Karl is a very decent sort of fellow, as fellows go. I knew him in Paris once upon a time. I suppose you will have to make an alliance *de convenance* some day, and this really seems the best thing you could do. Karl is n't overweighted with brains, perhaps, and he

is n't an Adonis ; but I don't believe he would intrude himself on you when he was drunk, or make you receive the ladies of the ballet, as the late Crown Prince might have done."

"Does he get drunk?" asked Lenore. Raoul turned away his head to hide a smile.

"I never saw him so," he answered. "Indeed, Princess, if you will pardon my saying it, I think you are making a mistake." Lenore was looking very unhappy.

"Do *you* advise me to marry a man I do not and cannot love?" she asked so piteously that Raoul relented.

"I beg your pardon, Princess," he said humbly. "I was taking the liberty of teasing you a little." She gave a sigh of relief as she said :

"I have told you so many times that I am never going to marry, and yet it does n't seem to make the slightest impression on you."

"My dear Princess," Raoul returned, "I have heard several women say that before." Lenore flushed with vexation.

“So you don’t believe me?” she demanded. “Well, I will tell you the reason. What is that?” she broke off abruptly, rising to her feet, for voices were heard at a little distance. “You must go this instant. Some one is coming.” Raoul got up deliberately and said calmly :

“Not until you promise to meet me here to-morrow night.”

“I can’t !” protested Lenore.

“Then I ’ll stay.”

“Oh, I will ! Anything ! Only go !”

“You must tell me why you won’t marry first.”

“I shall never marry because—” she hesitated, looked him straight in the eyes, and then finished her sentence—“because I am married already.” She did not have a chance to watch the effect of her bomb-shell, because the voices and footsteps were now distinctly audible, and Raoul had disappeared among the trees behind them. A second later, her father appeared, supported on the arm of the court-physician.

"They told us you were here," he said to his daughter, "so we walked in this direction."

"I am glad to see you taking some exercise," said the Princess, trying not to look anxious.

"The doctor insisted on it,—but what is the matter, Lenore? You look disturbed."

"I did n't know who you might be," she answered truthfully.

"Did you think we were trespassers? You should not stay out here alone if you feel nervous, though I am sure no one could get in. The guards are very watchful."

That night the Princess remembered that she had never once mentioned the picture in the locket. She had been so absorbed in her companion that she had never once thought of it, although it had been in her mind constantly since the Duke's revelation concerning it. She could not help having a happy little feeling inside of her that she was to see Delorme again, at the same time that her

pride objected to the manner of it. Something suggested to her that she was not bound to keep a promise extorted from her in that way, that this was a case where honor stood rooted in dishonor, and that it would be far more virtuous to break her word than to keep it ; but this something was not encouraged to present its views.

A flight of steps in a corner turret led down from the Princess's apartments to a small private garden consecrated to her especial use. This opened into the big gardens, and these again into the park, so the question of outgoings and incomings was not a perplexing one. The following evening she retired to her rooms at about eleven, dismissed her maids, and, five minutes later, having thrown a lace scarf over her evening gown, walked calmly down the little spiral staircase, unlocked the door at the foot of the turret, and walked across the two gardens, which were separated only by a hedge, and out into the park beyond, through a gate in the iron palings, of which she

had a key. The gardens were lighted by incandescent lamps with colored globes, but out in the park a faint gleam of moonlight threw strange dark shadows on the turf underfoot, and lent a shade of mystery to spots that she knew so well by the light of the sun. In one open glade, surrounded by beeches, a group of deer stood drinking out of a little pool, but they scattered at her approach, though they would run up to meet her in the daytime, and take pieces of bread out of her hand. Nevertheless, Lenore was not frightened. She was only excited and very, very happy, though she reproached herself for being so. She made her way to the big oak, so absorbed in the tumult of feeling inside her that she was hardly conscious of the beauty of the night around her. As she approached, Raoul came to meet her. He was in uniform once more, full-dress uniform, and it suited him very well.

"We must not stay here; it is not safe," Lenore said, without any greeting, and, turning, she silently led the way to a wilder part of the park by paths the deer

had made. At last she stopped on a little hillock covered with pines, with an open space all around it, except just at the back, where a dense thicket of young trees grew.

“Nobody could surprise you here,” she said quietly, seating herself on a fallen tree. The moonbeams, flittering through the thick foliage above, fell on her uncovered head and on her white neck and arms, shining through the film of lace that covered them. The gleam of diamonds was in her hair and on her neck. Raoul sank down on the ground, leaning his back against the tree on which she was sitting, and said in the plaintive tone she could never resist :

“You need not be so dignified, Princess. I know perfectly well you did n’t say you ’d come of your own accord. You don’t have to make it so evident.” Lenore had to unbend a little as she answered :

“It makes me feel so cheap, like a kitchen maid having a stolen interview with a groom.”

“What a proud person you are!” ex-

claimed Raoul. "Now I am different. I have n't an atom of that inconvenient article, and if a pleasant thing comes in my way, I take it without a thought of my dignity, though perhaps you are thinking I have n't much to compromise."

"Yes," the Princess answered calmly. "The way you used to treat me when we were at the mill showed me you had n't any pride." Raoul had to laugh.

"Oh, the mill," he replied, "were we ever there? It seemed as if all that happened some time in the dark ages to one of my ancestors, and that I had read about it in a book. Do you know, Princess, I have lost my first impression of you completely."

"I am glad of that," she said fervently. "For it was a very disagreeable self I showed you."

"I wonder you were not more so, the position was such an irritating one," he remarked.

"You were very polite to me," she replied.

"As much so as you are to me to-

night?" he asked; then went on in a tone of entreaty: "Please don't be so very—far-off, Princess. I am not going to presume, and you need n't keep me in my place. I know what you are feeling about it, so let 's forget it all and be happy. I am dreadfully afraid of you when you are so dignified; and you look so stunning in your lace and diamonds that I feel I ought to get down on my knees and say my prayers to you." The corners of the Princess's mouth relaxed into a smile. She relented, in spite of all her resolutions to the contrary, and said genially:

"Since I have come, I suppose I might as well enjoy it. It is poor policy to have the sin on my conscience and none of the fun."

"I should say it was. What does it matter if you do unbend a little for one night? It is only the humblest of your slaves."

"Yes, I have found you very humble," remarked the Princess, sarcastically.

"Did Prince Karl ever see you like

this?" he demanded abruptly and inconsequently.

"Like what? You don't mean at a secret rendezvous?"

"Good heavens, no! I mean in this magnificent get-up."

"He has never seen me at all."

"Are you sure of that? Don't you suppose he had a surreptitious glance before he made his proposals? Now you probably would have said I never saw you before I took you prisoner."

"I most certainly should have. I appear in public so seldom. Still you must have seen me to recognize me as you did. I have always been meaning to ask you about that."

"I saw you in Paris two years ago, and spent an afternoon in a fiacre chasing around after your carriage. You were with the Princess Helena."

"Really!" exclaimed Lenore, with great interest. "Why did n't you ever tell me before?"

"And I 'll wager this Karl has seen you too"—Raoul was beginning without

taking any notice of her question, when she interrupted him :

“Why do you keep dragging his name in?”

“Because, as I told you the other day, I think he would make an excellent husband for Your Highness.” Lenore frowned.

“Have you forgotten what I told you yesterday?” she demanded.

“You were not joking then?”

“Joking! I should say I was not. It is as true as that I am sitting here.” To her surprise, her companion did not seem at all dismayed at the tidings. She had fancied that it had been in his thoughts continuously ever since she told him, and that it would be the first subject he would introduce. His indifference was disconcerting.

“How did it happen? Will you tell me?” he asked calmly.

“I hardly know myself. It was when I was a child, and the marriage was made for political reasons. My mother told me because she was afraid my father would

marry me to some one else, which she thought would be a sin, even if I did it unconsciously ; and she made me promise solemnly not to let him know I knew, for she was sure he would be very angry at her."

"But who is the man?" asked Raoul.

"That is the strangest part of all. I do not know who it was. My mother would not tell me. It was a boy, a few years older than myself, I fancy. The marriage was to cement a treaty and was to be kept secret for several years ; but soon afterwards, for some reason that I don't understand, they did n't wish to be friends any longer,—my father and the other people concerned, I mean,—so they agreed to ignore it. I suppose it would have had to be made public if they had had it annulled. There, that is all I know, the most of that is guess-work."

"And do you really mean to tell me that you don't know who your husband is?" demanded Raoul.

"I have n't an idea. I have thought over every one of suitable rank a thou-

sand times, but not one of them seems probable. Besides he may be dead, or married, not knowing that he had a wife already. When my mother told me, she said there were only two people alive besides herself who knew, and that my father was one of these. The other may be dead by this time too."

"Perhaps he was not of very high rank. There might be some secret hold over the Duke that you do not know about."

"Perhaps," the Princess answered slowly. "I have often thought of that. The marriage being ignored so completely looks that way; and yet, my father has a great deal of pride, and I do not think any compulsion would make him marry his daughter beneath her. I wish I had n't made that promise to my mother," she added. "I have often wondered if I am really bound by it. It would make no difference to her now if my father were displeased with her. I reason it all out that I am not bound, yet, somehow, I can never make up my mind to break it."

"And can you remember nothing your-

self, or were you too young?" Raoul asked.

"There are one or two things I remember about it, though I had no idea at the time what was happening. It was only by the light of after knowledge that I put two and two together. The scene made a great impression on me," she went on. "It was in the middle of the night and I had been asleep hours and hours, and my mother awoke me herself, and dressed me in a magnificent frock that I had never seen before, and she did n't know how my clothes went and had difficulty putting them on, and when I looked around for my nurse, she was not in the room. And then my father came and carried me in his arms to the chapel and I was a little frightened in the dark passages, but the bright light in the chapel and my new clothes soon made me forget it. And then I remember a little boy who took my hand and kissed me, and then the next thing—Do you know, Captain Delorme," she broke off, "I have always thought I could know my husband by what happened next.

He would be sure to remember it, for he was older than I, and I know I dreamed of it for years afterwards. All I would have to do to be sure he was the right person would be to ask him what the parrot said."

"The parrot said, 'Go to Hell,'" Raoul replied solemnly. Lenore rose to her feet and he followed her example.

"Some one has told you," she exclaimed.

"Listen to me for a minute," he said imperiously; then went on in his usual quiet manner: "And the little girl was holding the little boy's hand and a big man was standing in front of them in a gorgeous robe of white and gold, and he was reading something out of a book. And finally he stopped, and a queer cracked voice came out of the shadows behind the altar, 'Go to Hell.' And the big man was so startled that he dropped the book, and the little boy's father went to see what it was, and he found the parrot and chased it out of a window. But, Princess, you must n't look so pale. Sit

down, I beg of you, and let me finish my story." Lenore sank down on the fallen tree, overpowered by the tale she was hearing, some of which she had remembered before, but all of which came back to her as what had really happened. What did it mean that this young soldier, a mere captain in the army, could tell it to her? He must have been a boy himself at the time. Was there another one present besides the one to whom she had been married? In the meanwhile the familiar voice was continuing: "And after the parrot had been put out the window, the big man produced a ring, and the little boy's father, who prided himself on being very strong in his fingers, took it and broke it into two parts. One you have in your hand, Princess, and here is the other." He placed a fragment of a gold ring in her lap, then taking a wax taper out of his pocket, he lit it and held it towards her. Lenore mechanically picked up the piece of a ring and placed it beside the one she had brought with her to show him. The two parts fitted perfectly, making a plain gold

marriage ring of the smallest size. She then turned over the two halves and read the inscription engraved inside. She did not need to look at her own. She knew every letter of the "n-o-r-e—R." On his she read, "a-o-u-l—L-e." The taper flickered and went out.

"I do not understand what this means, Captain Delorme," she said presently, recovering herself.

"It means that you are my wife," he replied quietly. The Princess rose to her feet again, dropping the pieces of ring to the ground, and drew herself up to her full height.

"It is impossible," she replied coldly.

"On the contrary, it is the literal truth," said Raoul. "Your father would confirm it if you were at liberty to ask him." She gave him a look that made him shiver in spite of the warmth of the evening, as she demanded:

"Do you mean to tell me that I, the Princess Lenore of Herzogthum, the future Duchess of that country, am the wife of a captain in the army of Königreich?"

It is preposterous. Nothing could have forced my father into such an infamous act."

"Nevertheless, it is the truth," Raoul answered, with difficulty controlling the anger that her scorn of him aroused. "May I ask, Princess, why you are so contemptuous?" he continued. "I may not be your equal in rank, but I have frequently heard you lament the necessity of marrying, if at all, for reasons of state. You have often been an advocate of marriages for love." Lenore interrupted him:

"What has love to do with it?" she demanded haughtily. Raoul turned white as he answered:

"It happens to have a great deal to do with it in this particular case." The Princess stared at him angrily.

"Do you mean that you are deluding yourself with the idea that the Princess Lenore is in love with you, Captain Delorme? I certainly thought you were a gentleman, whatever else your birth might lack. I should as soon think of being in love with my footman," Then Raoul lost

all control of himself, and said with the calmness that denoted the white heat of anger with him :

“And I thought you were a lady. Still, though I might have been your footman, I happen to be your husband, and, that being the case, I do not see why I should not have the smallest one of my rights.” And moving quickly towards her as she stood there in the moonlight, her eyes flashing as brilliantly as her diamonds, he took her in his arms and kissed her on her cheek before she had divined what he was going to do. It was only a second before he came to his senses and loosed his arms. A second later he found himself alone. He was ashamed of himself and, at the same time, exultant at what he had done. He blushed for his deed, while his young, vigorous blood danced in his veins with joy ; and falling full length on the ground, he kissed the grass which her feet had trampled. The touch of something cold met his lips. It was one of the pieces of the ring.

CHAPTER XI.

AN AMBASSADOR.

ONE evening, about ten days after Captain Delorme had made his astonishing communication to her, the Princess was dressing for a state reception, having dined alone in her own apartments, when a page brought word that the Duke wished to see her as soon as she was dressed. She found him in a small ante-chamber to the ball-room, talking with some officials, who withdrew as she entered.

“You wished to see me, Father,” Lenore began. The Duke plunged boldly in.

“I wish to speak to you about an ambassador whom Prince Karl has sent to plead his suit for him.”

“How very impertinent and how very

ungentlemanly !” exclaimed the Princess. “ I would not have believed it of any man. After I had distinctly said that nothing on earth could make me listen to him !” The Duke hesitated, coughed a little, then said :

“ The truth is, my dear, that they, I mean I, did not think it best to transmit your message quite as you gave it.” The Princess looked at him scornfully.

“ I suppose you told him that I was undecided, that I was a young girl who did not know her own mind, that the idea of marriage frightened me, and all the rest of it ?” The Duke moved uneasily from one foot to another, for this was unpleasantly near the message that had been sent.

“ I hope you wont be rude to this young man,” he said timidly. “ He is an old comrade of Prince Karl’s and very high in General Malakoff’s favor. He is on his own personal staff.” Lenore’s heart gave a leap as a wild idea flashed through her head at her father’s words, but she dismissed it the next second as preposterous, and answered calmly :

“Of course I shall not. He is probably not worth being rude to, and, besides, he is not to blame, and it is not fair that I should treat him as if he were. I shall be perfectly civil and friendly, but I shall not leave him in doubt as to my state of mind towards his master.”

“If you would only hear what he has to say about the Prince first,” entreated the Duke.

“I have not the slightest objection to that. He may talk about him for a week if it will give you any pleasure. Indeed, I should rather like to know something about him. He must have had a romantic life, and the papers have said so remarkably little about his past that one can't help suspecting that it has been hushed up for some purpose. Now, Father, shall we go in? We are late as it is.”

“He is really a very attractive young man. I was much taken with him,” the Duke remarked, as he offered his arm to his daughter and conducted her across the room and through the heavy portières

into the ball-room beyond. Two officials, standing on each side, raised their wands as they appeared, and an instantaneous silence fell upon the assembly. To the left of the doorway was a group of men and women, among whom was a tall, broad-shouldered young soldier in full-dress uniform, with many ribbons and medals on his breast. It was towards this group that the Duke turned.

“Captain Delorme,” he said ceremoniously to the young soldier, “I wish to present you to my daughter, the Princess Lenore.” The young man flushed slightly and the Princess turned white, but neither showed any more emotion than could be attributed to the mission on which he had come and the Princess’s well known feelings about it. Many eyes were upon them, so Lenore extended her hand for him to kiss, saying in her most royal manner :

“I trust you will enjoy your stay among us, Captain Delorme,” and passed on to another group of the ladies of the court. The Duke looked uneasy, and tried to

cover his daughter's coldness by extra cordiality to the young ambassador. He could not understand it. She had said that she would be friendly, and Lenore always kept her word.

Long practice at self-repression made it possible for the Princess to talk to those people whom she was pleased to notice as if her mind were in her words. And so it was to a certain extent, for she had learned to put private concerns aside until public duties were performed. When supper was announced and she had established herself at the head of the table over which she presided, with those individuals to whom she was the least indifferent or whom she wished to honor, on either side of her, the Court Chamberlain came up with Captain Delorme, and a request from the Duke that the Princess would give him the seat at her right hand. The Duke was brave when he was at a little distance from his daughter. There was nothing to do but to comply as graciously as possible. She was too proud to seem to avoid talking to her guest, so she ad-

dressed some commonplace remarks to him in a manner that, while it seemed friendly to the others at the table, would accentuate in his mind the difference between the past and the present. Delorme was as thoroughly master of himself as she was, and answered her remarks appropriately ; and when she turned to her left-hand neighbor, devoted himself, with a great deal of apparent interest, to the very pretty Maid of Honor who sat on the other side of him. This was the Countess Hilda von Lindenberg, a wealthy young heiress, whose good spirits amused the Princess, at the same time that her slightness of character made it impossible for her to feel any real friendship for her. Delorme seemed to find her very amusing himself, and it apparently did not concern him that his other neighbor did not pay him as much attention as was the due of the guest of honor who sat on her right hand.

During the next few days, the Duke arranged frequent interviews between his daughter and Delorme, in the course of

which they kept strictly to their rôle of strangers, at the same time that the ambassador did not once refer to his errand, the furthering of the cause of Prince Karl. At last, the Princess came to be a little piqued that he never gave a hint, in word or look, of having so much as seen her before the Duke had presented him to her in the ball-room on the night of his arrival ; and that he seemed as anxious as herself to avail himself of every pretext to put an end to his conversations with her. It had not taken him twenty-four hours to be on the best of terms with every one else about the court. With the Countess Hilda, he was especially friendly, and, from her windows, Lenore often saw them walking in the garden and the park together, laughing and talking as if they had known each other all their lives. The Countess was so full of his praises that she could talk of nothing else, and Lenore heard frequent descriptions of traits and little ways about which she was very much better posted than her companion. It interested as well as pained

her to watch the Countess's blind sallies in a country she knew so well ; and she continually found herself changing the subject and leading up to it again in a way that annoyed her with its inconsistency. The ignorance of those about her of there being any especial tie between her and Delorme surprised her. She could hardly believe in it. It seemed as if all they had been to each other must be written on their faces, where any one could read it.

About a week after Delorme's arrival, a ceremony was to take place in the chapel of the palace. The baby of one of the court officials was to be christened, and the Princess was to stand god-mother. The chapel was a beautiful specimen of Gothic architecture, with rare pieces of carving and wonderful stained-glass windows, through which the morning sunlight was streaming. All the court was assembled, the men in full-dress uniform and the women in the thinnest and lightest of muslins, for the day was very warm. Delorme was given a good place in front, directly opposite the font where the Princess

stood with the baby in her arms, the red light from the window above her giving a tinge of rose to her white gown and the long embroidered robes of the child. The organ was being played softly, and not a rustle broke the reverent hush as the old priest pronounced a blessing on the child he had named. Delorme had never seen the chapel before, and his thoughts were busy with the other ceremony that had taken place there so many years before, as he tried to adjust his recollections to the reality. When the Princess turned to leave the font, their eyes met, for the first time with any consciousness of the past in them, and he knew by the faint blush that came to her cheeks that her thoughts had been where his had been. He looked over to where the Duke stood serene and self-satisfied. Evidently he had dismissed that other sacrament from his memory in full confidence that it would never be brought to light. The Princess had to pass close by the end of the seat where he was standing.

“Forgive me,” he murmured as she

went by. She must have heard him, though her face gave no sign ; but neither did she look angry. He noticed that she said something to her father as they passed down the aisle together, and a moment later he himself received a message from the Duke that the Princess would receive him in the tapestry room immediately. He was to be given another chance to plead the cause of Prince Karl. The Duke did not know how little he had availed himself of the former ones.

The Countess Hilda waylaid him outside of the ante-chamber through which the tapestry room was reached, and he had to stop a minute and listen to some story she had to tell him. The story was very amusing and was well told to the accompaniment of a most agreeable laugh, but he found it hard to appear as amused as politeness demanded.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "You look as solemn as if you were going to be led to execution."

"I am to have an interview with the Princess," he answered literally, too ab-

sent-minded to think of the application to her words. The Countess laughed again as she said :

“I don’t wonder you look frightened. I have noticed you did n’t seem to take to her especially ; still, she is n’t so dreadful as she looks.”

“No,” Delorme answered, smiling, “but she is n’t exactly the kind of girl you are.” The Countess looked gratified, and took her departure. Raoul stepped through the portières that separated the ante-room from the passage, and found himself in the presence of the Princess. Had she heard, he wondered. She did not show any signs of discomposure as she turned and addressed him, but her manner was icier than it had ever been, even in those first days at the mill.

“The Duke has instructed me to receive you,” she said.

“Is it to be here, Your Highness ?” he asked.

“Is n’t this imposing enough for the ambassador of a prince ? As it happens, we cannot go into the tapestry room, for

a very prosaic reason,—they have been burning pepper there to keep away moths. I might as well tell you once for all,” she went on, “that anything you have to say to me on the subject of Prince Karl is so much waste of breath ; but if you consider it necessary, in order to say that you have done your best, it had better be now. I shall not trouble myself with any more purposeless interviews.”

During the christening, Raoul had made up his mind so decidedly that another day should not pass without some definite understanding with the Princess, that even the coldness of her manner and the fear that she might have overheard his conversation with the Countess Hilda did not keep him from saying :

“There are other subjects than Prince Karl on which I should like to talk to Your Highness.” He was not looking at her any longer with the eyes of a stranger. Lenore frowned as she replied, in her most frigid tones :

“There is no other subject possible

between Captain Delorme and myself." Raoul moved a step nearer.

"Princess," he said seriously, "when you stood in the chapel just now, and remembered the other ceremony that took place there so many years ago, did it not make you feel a little more kindly towards the boy who stood by your side then? Can you not forgive me? The provocation was great." The Princess flushed, and she answered angrily:

"Are you going to revive that absurd story again? Do you really think you can impose on me with it? As if I did n't know you got the particulars from some one else. I was a fool to tell you about my promise to my mother. As if the Duke would have married his daughter to a man in your position. Besides, you said that my father would confirm your story, and evidently you are an utter stranger to him." Delorme had been growing whiter and whiter, and now he said calmly:

"It is only that he has not yet realized my identity. As for the rest of what you

have said, it is false, and you know it. You choose to pretend to doubt my word because you think you can hurt me most in that way. You know that I told you the literal truth and that I am incapable of anything else ; and—by God—you shall not leave the room until you acknowledge it.” He placed himself in front of the door, which he had shut in the beginning of their interview in response to a gesture of hers. The Princess looked him straight in the eyes :

“ I never shall,” she said defiantly. They looked at each other for a full minute with concentrated rage in both their eyes, and then Delorme dropped his and stepped aside.

“ I beg your pardon,” he said as quietly as if he had trodden on her gown. “ That is not the way to do it. Pass by, my Princess.” He opened the door for her, and she swept out of the room without another look.

That same afternoon, Captain Delorme, to his unmixed astonishment, received word that the Princess would like to see

him in her private apartments. It was the first time that he had ever entered them, but he was too disturbed in mind to take in more than a general sense of beauty and harmony. The Princess was sitting in a carved oaken chair that resembled a throne in a projecting window, her hands occupied with a piece of embroidery. The Countess Hilda and another lady of the court were sewing beside her ; but when the page announced Captain Delorme, they took up their work and retreated to the other end of the room, far enough off to be out of earshot. The Princess inclined her head as he approached and motioned him to a seat, but did not rise or lay aside her work.

“Captain Delorme,” she said without any preliminaries, “I wish to beg your pardon for what I said to you this morning. As you said, I knew perfectly well that it was not true. The story is too improbable to have really happened, but I am certain that you believe in it. I never have had the slightest doubt on the subject.” Raoul turned pale and appeared so

moved that she said anxiously : " Do be careful. My women can see you. You had better turn your chair so as to face the window. I will appear to be calling your attention to something." He did as she told him to, and in a second was himself again.

" I never expected this," he said in a low voice. " And I do not think I have deserved it. You have much to forgive me for, Princess."

" I wished to say this to you for my own sake, not yours," she continued. " Pride of birth is all very well, but it is not necessary to heap scorn on those who are not so fortunate. I was going to tell you this this morning, but I was angry at you gossiping about me with one of my Maids of Honor, and so I made my offence even worse. I tell you frankly that I am ashamed of myself."

" Ah, Princess," said Raoul ; then added : " And will you forgive *me* ? "

" As I hope to be forgiven. I do not suppose we can ever be friends again, but there is no reason that I know of why we

should not be friendly during the rest of your stay here. I believe you go to-morrow or next day."

"The Duke has asked me to stay another week. He wants me to be here for his birthday; but it shall be as Your Highness says," he replied humbly.

"Stay if you like. It will do no good, but neither will it do any harm. We both have a great deal to regret, but the provocation was so extreme that I do not think we need have any hard feelings. Besides, I feel under great obligations to you for your behavior towards me in the mountains, and I do not like to seem ungrateful."

"Don't talk of gratitude," entreated Raoul, who was quite overcome, and had appeared most unlike himself all through the interview.

"As to—the subject of our quarrel," Lenore continued, "I do not see that it matters much whether it is true or not. It cannot be binding in any case, and it would be the simplest matter in the world to get it annulled when either of us wants

to marry. Perhaps it was done years ago. There is no reason you should not ask the Duke about it some time. There, Captain Delorme, you may go now," she said, in conclusion ; then, holding out her hand to him : " If we can't be friends, there is no reason why we should be enemies." He bent and kissed it, and then bowed himself out of the room without a word more. The Countess Hilda was both surprised and grieved that he did not so much as look in her direction.

The next morning, the Princess was cutting roses in her private garden and talking with the Countess Hilda, when the Duke joined them, accompanied by Captain Delorme, to whom he had taken a great fancy. After a little general conversation, he withdrew, taking the Countess, much against her will, with him, and leaving Delorme with his daughter. The latter went on cutting pink roses without apparently noticing her change of companions ; but she was smiling a little and did not look formidable, so Raoul ventured to address her.

"Is it true, Princess?" he asked boldly.

"Is what true?" she returned.

"That we are — not — enemies any longer?"

"Not unless you feel disposed to quarrel with me."

"There is nothing on earth I feel less like doing. Can't you leave those roses? You must have cut a ton," he went on, resuming his old manner towards her. Lenore smiled with pleasure, but turned away her face so that he could not see it.

"Will you have a rose?" she asked.

"Oh, I forgot. Hilda gave you one."

He took the flower out of his button-hole, dropped it on the gravel path, and deliberately crushed it with his heel; then stretched out his hand for Lenore's rose.

"The Countess would feel flattered," said the latter.

"This button-hole shall never have another person's flower in it, now that you have honored it," he said, looking at her with a smile in his eyes. Before she knew it the Princess was smiling back.

"Are we not something more than just

not—enemies?” he demanded. All his humility had left him.

“I never meant to be friends with you again,” she replied hesitatingly. “You see you showed me once that it was possible for you to misconstrue my friendship. You don’t think so now, do you?”

“I don’t think what, Princess?” he asked, purposely refusing to understand her.

“You don’t think I care for you?” she answered, turning and looking him straight in the eyes, though her face flushed a little.

“I only wish I could,” he replied ; then went on : “We may agree that our marriage is nothing, Princess, but still we can’t treat each other quite like other people. It is a something between us that neither of us can ever forget. And then there are those happy, happy days we spent together when, with no stupid formalities between us, we learned to know each other as we really are, and to trust one another, and to feel that we are really in sympathy, no matter to what

different stations of life we have been called. I know I could not feel that sense of being in my right place when I am beside you if it were not, to a certain extent, mutual. We have not long to be together, let us enjoy that. Everybody is anxious to throw us together, and it will seem the most natural thing in the world. The Duke just now advised me to persuade you to take a walk in the park. Will you go, Princess?" Her eyes had been cast down on the ground during this speech, and she had looked like anybody rather than the proud Princess Lenore; but now she raised them and there was a question in their depths, which Raoul answered when he assured her solemnly:

"You need not be afraid of me. I will not let myself remember that there is a shadow of a bond between us. I promise you, on my honor, that I will never take any personal liberty with you unless you yourself first take one with me,—not that I should consider it a liberty," he added, with a smile. Lenore smiled too.

“I will go with you,” she said, evidently not at all offended at the familiarity in the last speech. And together they walked across the gardens and out into the shady recesses of the park.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRINCESS SURRENDERS.

CAPTAIN DELORME stayed several days longer at the court of Herzogthum, and it was astonishing how many interviews with the Princess his mission required. The Duke began to be very hopeful. The court was unusually gay, and an entertainment of some kind took place almost every evening. Lenore had always looked on these functions as disagreeable duties to be gone through with ; but now she found herself taking actual pleasure in them, so great a difference does the presence of one person with whom we are in absolute sympathy make.

On the King's birthday there were great festivities, finished off by a reception held in the garden. The night was warm and

beautiful, and every foot of the gardens was lighted up by electric lights in colored globes. It was a beautiful sight. The King and the Princess received the ambassadors, the dignitaries of state, the nobility and gentry of Herzogthum, and the distinguished foreigners visiting the country, on a raised platform. Raoul had no eyes for any one but Lenore, who was looking more beautiful than he had ever seen her, in a Paris creation of some white gauzy stuff. He stayed near her as long as he dared, and then wandered away to a seat near by, whence he could still look at her. Here he was joined by the Countess Hilda and several others, but being in the mood for anything but merriment, he managed to make his escape on some pretext or other.

Although she had not seemed to notice him, the Princess had been conscious of his presence, and when he disappeared, her gaiety went with him. She became preoccupied, and it was only the force of long habit that kept her up to her duties. At length, however, they were over for

the moment, and she was free to amuse herself as she chose. She looked around in vain for Raoul, not that she intended to seek him, and then lost herself in a little grove that stood back of the platform. It was not so light here, and the music was fainter. She sat down on a bench to rest. Presently she heard voices, and saw Delorme coming through the trees towards her. With him was the child of the Master of Horse, a boy of four, who was the plaything of the whole court.

"May we join you, Princess?" he asked, coming straight towards her.

"What are you doing up at this time of night, René?" asked the Princess, answering him only with a smile.

"As if the reception could go on without René to look after things," said Raoul.

"You said you 'ld toss me some more when we got away from the people," René demanded indignantly of his companion.

"Well, you ask the Princess if I may,"

said Raoul. The child ran up to her and rested his arms on her lap.

“Please may he? We’ll be very good and won’t wake the baby,” he added from force of habit.

“You little stupid, the baby is n’t here,” said Raoul, when Lenore had given consent and he had picked him up in his arms. He threw him up in the air several times, catching him as he came down. René screamed with delight and demanded to be thrown higher. Lenore became nervous and rose to her feet.

“Oh, do stop!” she entreated.

“Just once more,” pleaded René.

“Will you promise not to tease for any more then?” asked the Princess. René nodded his little head and Delorme gathered him up for a final toss. He threw him so high that Lenore shuddered.

“Oh, Raoul!” she exclaimed involuntarily; but he caught the child without any effort, and then turned upon her a look that said more than words.

“As if I would take any chances,” he declared with self-confidence; then added:

"I thought you never thought of people by their Christian names, Princess."

Lenore colored a little as she answered :

"And you never let anything pass. You know I did n't mean to."

"It is only people who are afraid who let things pass," he replied. Then, setting the child on his shoulder, he went on, a minute later : "You have not had any thing to eat and look tired out. Stay here and I will bring you something."

"I am tired," she answered, sitting down on the bench again, with a delicious sense of being cared for. He lingered a little as he said :

"I don't dare go unless you will promise to be here when I come back."

"I will unless something unexpected happens."

"I should n't want you to be a Casabianca," he returned, as he walked off with René kissing his hand to the Princess from his shoulder.

In a few minutes he came back carrying a tray with various eatables and drinkables on it.

"I let the waiter bring it only to the edge of the grove," he remarked.

"What have you done with René?" asked the Princess.

"I handed him over to his nurse, much to his disgust. He went off howling. It is a pity that so bright a child should be so abominably spoiled. Well, Princess, does my choice satisfy you? I never hoped for such good luck as another picnic with you," he added as he spread a napkin on her lap.

"We did n't have napkins, and you have my rôle," said Lenore. "We must stay here but a few minutes though. You know we are not in the backwoods now, and somebody might come this way."

"I don't believe so. I came only because I was watching you."

"Well, somebody may have been watching you,—the Countess, for instance."

"Does Your Highness do me the honor of being jealous?" Lenore only laughed for answer. "This is a very fortunate chance for me, because I am going home in the morning," he went on.

“Going home!” she exclaimed, hardly trying to hide the dismay she felt.

“Yes. I have had a letter from—I mean I have heard that the King is feeling very ill. I am much afraid that he has not long to live. A special messenger brought me a summons to return this afternoon.”

“You speak as if you cared personally,” remarked the Princess.

“I do. I have a great respect for my King, and I could not be fonder of him if he were my next of kin.”

“I wish he were,” she exclaimed impulsively; then tried to explain it away by saying: “I mean that I think you would make a good king.”

“Was that all you meant?” he asked earnestly. She dropped her eyes and did not answer. “Did you mean that if he were, you would let that little ceremony hold good?” he asked in a low voice.

“What if I did?” she returned. “It is not true, so it does not matter.”

“It does to me. You think you could

have loved me if things had been otherwise?" he added.

"I know I could," she answered frankly.

Just at that moment voices were heard approaching them. The Princess held up her hand warningly.

"Princess," he began solemnly, "to-night is the last time you will ever see Raoul Delorme——"

"The last time?" she interrupted, wonderingly.

"Yes, my Princess, the last time. I promise you that."

"Some one is surely coming and we must go," she exclaimed; then added: "But I can't say good-by to you forever just like this in a minute. I should like to express some of the pleasure I have had in our friendship," she explained, looking him straight in the eyes.

"I leave before six, so there is no help for it," he replied. She hesitated a second, then said boldly:

"I will meet you to-night after this is over in the garden." The next second

she had disappeared among the trees. The voices of the intruders died away in the distance, and Raoul was left smiling to himself, well pleased at the result of their interview. He had made a bold throw, and had hardly dared hope he would win. He had not believed that the Princess, even if taken by surprise with the news of his departure, would forget her dignity sufficiently to propose a private interview, or even to consent to one if he suggested it.

There was just the faintest trace of coming morning in the sky when the Princess let herself out of the door at the foot of the turret. Raoul approached her from out the shadow of some shrubbery, but she put her finger on her lips—it was just light enough for him to see the gesture—and led the way across the garden to a little summer-house overgrown with vines. Orange trees in tubs were standing in front of it, and the air was sweet with their fragrance. Lenore sat down on a bench and motioned Raoul to a seat at the other end of it.

"I have been wishing ever since that I had n't proposed meeting you," she began coldly.

"I knew you would be, proud woman that you are," he answered. "And I suppose you took off your beautiful gown so that the interview might seem more commonplace. I don't like the one you have on."

"I did n't want you to," she replied, with a little laugh. "Besides, I am not going to get pneumonia for any man. I had to see you in some way or other, and this was the only way that occurred to me," she continued after a moment's silence. "I wanted to find out why I should never see you again—and there was something else besides."

"Let's take the something else first," he suggested. "What is it, my Princess?" She hesitated before she began:

"When we don't understand something our friends do, something that seems inconsistent and out of keeping with all you know of them, I think the right thing is to ask them about it, don't you?"

"Indeed I do. What have I done that you don't like?"

"It does n't seem a bit like you, and whenever I have had doubts of you before, I have always found myself mistaken. It is just this," she broke off suddenly. "You said you were a friend of Prince Karl's, and you come here as his ambassador, to forward his suit, and yet you do anything but that, and make uncomfortable insinuations against him into the bargain. It has troubled me, I confess." Raoul laughed a little relieved laugh that made her feel all was right immediately.

"Princess," he began, "you have told me more than once that you trusted me; well, I am going to ask you to do so now. I know it seems dishonorable, but I assure you, although you cannot understand it now and I cannot explain it, that it is not really so. Some day this seeming disloyalty will be explained. Do you believe me?"

"I think I should believe anything you told me," she answered simply. "And I

am so glad, for I have n't liked it. And now tell me another thing," she went on, "an unimportant little thing, but I have wondered about it so much. Why did you say you had n't any wife that morning after you had been delirious if you believed me to be your wife?"

"I said it without thinking, and then, of course, I had to let it stand. I could n't explain."

"You knew about it at the time then?"

"Yes; I had known it for some time."

"For just how long? Not when you saw me in Paris surely?"

"No, not until we were at the mill. Do you remember the afternoon when Kriegmann inspected you in my place?" he asked.

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, I was told that day. You will know all about that some day, too, but I can't tell you now."

"Another mystery. You are full of them. But I don't see how you are going to explain all these things to me if I am never to see you again. You have n't

told me yet why that is to be," she broke off suddenly. "And so this is the beginning of the end," she went on presently as he did not reply. All her curiosity seemed to have left her. "This is the end of our friendship. It has been a great pleasure to me, as you know; and if ever I can do anything for you, I am sure you will let me know. If ever you should want to marry a girl who has no fortune——"

"Princess, you are cruel," he broke in vehemently. "How could I ever marry when I have the shadow of a right to call you my wife? You talk very lightly of the end, of the pleasures of our friendship, and all that sort of nonsense, but do you really believe for one second that it has been friendship between us? That was a convenient word only so long as we said good-night, it meant we were to meet again in the morning. Good-night means something quite different now. Do you realize that it means *never* to see each other again? It is not only the sharp pain of parting, but the dull ache of longing that never stops for a moment

day or night. You asked me why we were never to see each other again and I will answer you now. I once told you that I did n't have any pride, and when I said that, I lied. I am too proud to accept the only position you let me have. I am too proud to be treated like a casual acquaintance by the woman whom I might call my wife, too proud to have that tie ignored by you, too proud to let you make so great a distinction between myself and my station. And, then, I cannot stand it any longer. I would rather go where I shall never see you again. It is dreadful to be so near you and to know that you will never give in, that wealth and rank are of more importance to you than my love."

"I believe you think still that I care for you," Lenore remarked, trying to speak indifferently, but making a failure of it, for her voice trembled.

"I don't think it. I know it," he replied calmly. "Can you deny it? Look me in the eyes and tell me that you do not love me, and I will believe it." But

the Princess had buried her face in her hands.

"Lenore," cried Raoul, "let me have my promise back." She raised her eyes, looked in his for a second, and then flung both her arms about his neck.

"Now you are free," she sobbed, burying her face in his shoulder. "I can't help it. I have tried so hard, but it is too much for me."

"I don't think I should ever have given in except for the knowledge that I was really your wife after all," she said, half an hour later. "Someway, the idea of a princess falling in love with a captain in the army is so incongruous. I am afraid it will make us ridiculous, all the same. The papers will make a great many vulgar jokes about us."

"If it is only *us*, I don't care," he answered. "Do you really mean, Lenore, that you will come to me openly, before all the world?"

"I certainly should n't in any other way," she answered proudly; then went on: "I had better tell you that I still

don't like the idea at all, and I still think I could conquer myself, if it were not for your side of the question. I simply could n't break faith with you now. I never should have another tranquil moment, my conscience would trouble me so." He stooped and kissed her, and she broke off abruptly: "What utter nonsense! As if I could live without you, now that I have once given in to it and have felt how sweet it is. I will live with you in a hut if necessary, but I must be with you somewhere. I have never loved any one before, and I feel as if I were one of those logs that I used to watch from the window of the mill when the river used to sweep them down over the falls. I hope it will not be over the falls, but even if it is, I have got to go."

"Are you sure the sacrifice will not seem too big after I have gone?" Raoul asked when the day was beginning to break and the shadows to flee away. Lenore looked at him reproachfully.

"Do I seem like a woman who repents?" she demanded.

“My dear girl,—I may call you ‘my dear girl’ now, I suppose?” he said, with a suggestive smile.

“You have called me worse things than that in the last hour. Your mock homage has always amused me, Raoul,” she broke off. “At least, it used to make me angry at first. I felt as if we were two children playing that I was a princess. You have never felt an atom of real respect for my rank, or treated me, in spite of a few forms and ceremonies, any differently than you would have done if we had been of the same rank.”

“You see I knew you were my wife, and that made a certain difference; it made you seem less far above me,” he explained.

“And you won’t tell me how you came to find it out? Don’t you know that a man ought not to have any secrets from his wife?”

“I won’t have when you are my wife in dead earnest,” he answered, when he had recovered a little from the raptures her words caused in him.

“And you would n’t tell me how you came to have Queen Lenore’s picture either,” the Princess remarked reflectively.

“You shall know all about it some day, my beloved. Just have a little patience. I assure you solemnly that there is nothing in the least discreditable in any of my mysteries.”

“As if I needed to be told that,” she murmured.

“Now I must be off. I have stayed to the last second,” he said abruptly a few minutes later.

“You are not going now?” she demanded.

“I must. It is a question of duty.”

“And when shall I see you again?” she asked with a tear or two rolling down her cheeks. If her Maids of Honor could have seen their proud mistress now!

“I cannot tell, dear one,” he answered as he kissed them away. “You may not even hear from me for some time. I do not know if I can manage it, for I have some grave duties before me; but only believe in me. You will never mistrust

me? I give you my word of honor that everything shall be cleared up before I ask you for anything more." They were standing now, and Lenore put one of her hands on each of his shoulders and looked him straight in the eyes as she said :

"I have n't treated you so well as I might, but I am going to make it up to you. I shall not let myself have a regret or a misgiving, and whenever you want your wife, I will come to you ; but it must be openly, remember that. You must claim me before all the world. I will not act as if I were ashamed of my choice."

Five minutes later she was alone in the summer-house. An early sunbeam was invading it, and outside the earliest pipe of half-awakened birds had developed into a full chorus. The scent of the orange blossoms came in sweeter than ever, and the Princess, looking around her at a new world, saw that it was good.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CORONATION OF KING KARL.

A WEEK later, a small package was brought to the Princess as she sat alone at work in the summer-house in the garden, with the word that the bearer wished particularly to see her. She opened the package and found a stocking of coarse gray wool such as peasants wear. Her heart gave a big leap and she ordered the messenger to be brought to her immediately. It was Sergeant Kriegmann in civilian's clothes, accompanied by Balder. The dog looked at her suspiciously for a moment, then smelled her feet and hands, and then, with a yelp of satisfaction, jumped on her and began licking her face. Lenore released herself with difficulty.

“Captain Delorme told me he never

forgot any one," she said triumphantly to the Sergeant, whom she had not greeted before, both being too absorbed in watching the dog's actions. Then she dismissed the page and persuaded Balder to lie down quietly beside her.

"Well, Sergeant," she began graciously, "How does the world go with you since we left the mill?"

"Very well, Your Highness." The Sergeant was evidently overpowered by the unaccustomed magnificence around him.

"And how is the Captain?" she continued.

"I have n't seen him for several months until yesterday, when he came to Friedberg and told me to take Balder and this letter to Your Highness. He told me to send that package in first and that Your Highness would see me." He took a thick letter out of his pocket and handed it to the Princess. She received it indifferently and laid it on top of her work.

"And was he looking well?" she asked.

"He was looking pale and thin, Your Highness, but he said he had been sitting

up with a sick relative. And I was to wait here until to-morrow in case Your Highness should have anything to send back. The Captain must think a heap of Your Highness to be willing to give up Balder," he added naïvely. Evidently there was no doubt in the Sergeant's mind as to on which side the superiority lay.

"I suppose the Captain found so big a dog troublesome when he has no settled home, and he knew I was so fond of him and would take the best of care of him," she explained, patting the dog's head as it lay against her knee. "Well, Sergeant, times are changed," she went on. "I used to be your guest and now you are mine. We must see that you are treated well and have nothing to complain of. You shall go and have something to eat now and this afternoon I will send for you, and we will have a long talk about old times ; and to-morrow I will give you a letter of thanks to take back to the Captain." She called her page and gave the Sergeant into his care, and, being left alone once more, proceeded to open her

letter, the first love-letter she had ever received. She had never even seen a line of her lover's writing before, and the satisfaction of finding that he was the same on paper as in every-day life was great. The reading of the letter took the rest of the morning, and in the afternoon came the pleasure, almost as great, of answering it.

"It seems so strange that I should be writing to you in this way," she wrote at length. "A week ago I was so sure that nothing would ever make me give in to my feelings for you. I would die rather than forget my high estate, and now my only wonder is that I did n't give in ages ago. It is so unspeakably delicious.

.

"There is so much I should like to ask you about, so much I should like to tell you, and there was so little time. I did n't know it then, but I see now that I have been storing up things in my mind ever since the old days in the mill when, from Louison's window, I used to watch you giving orders to your men or playing with Balder, believing all the time, or choosing to believe, that it was only an æsthetic

pleasure in your good looks kept me there. I used to wonder what you would think about one thing and another."

There was a great deal more in the same strain, which goes to show that princesses in love are very much like other girls, though Raoul did not think so when he received this letter.

He had said in his that he would not have any means of communicating with her for some little time, so the Princess was not alarmed that she heard nothing for the next ten days. On the eleventh, the whole court was startled by the news of the King of Königreich's death. He had been ill so many years that everybody had given up expecting it. But now he was dead at last, and King Karl reigned in his stead.

The Duke had confidently expected a renewal of that Prince's proposals after Delorme had returned, for he had put a favorable construction on his daughter's friendliness with his ambassador. He had been surprised at first and then angry when none had come, but the King's

death explained it all; and when an invitation arrived for himself and his daughter and their suite to be present at the coronation of the new King, he was graciously pleased to accept, and insisted on Lenore's accepting too, which, greatly to his surprise, she did without a protest. The Princess herself was a little conscience-stricken about the disappointment which she thought was in store for him. It seemed to her, also, that it was extremely foolish for her to go to the coronation, thus running the risk of awkward complications with Prince Karl, who would probably see hope for himself in her coming at all; still she could not resist the chance of being in the same atmosphere as Delorme once more. If only she knew the truth of his relations with the Prince, she felt she would not be so much at sea. Or if he would only send her some word as to his wishes in the matter, though probably he, like herself, would not be able to resist the temptation of seeing her again, no matter what the consequences might be.

The coronation was to be an imposing ceremony. Königreich was prosperous, at peace with all the world, its ancient difficulties with Herzogthum settled for the present, and everything good was expected of the new King. The late King had been a good ruler, a man who judged for himself and judged wisely; and the confidence he had shown himself to feel in his successor gave faith to the people. General Malakoff, too, their idol, was enthusiastic in his praises. Accordingly, no expense was to be spared to make the occasion a memorable one.

The Duke and the Princess and their suite arrived in a special train, and were driven in a coach drawn by six magnificent horses to the oak grove where these ceremonies had taken place ever since, hundreds of years before, Königreich had won her liberty, and under its shade, on the evening of a decisive battle, had invested the royal power in the man to whom she owed her liberty, and his descendants for ever and ever. Lenore was surprised to find that they were given the

seats of honor above all the distinguished visitors, until she remembered the probable reason for the distinction, and wished she could retreat to a less prominent position. Every inch of ground within the radius of a quarter of a mile had its occupant, every limb of the ancient oaks overhead swarmed with human beings. The waiting was long and tedious, and the Princess looked in vain for the man she longed to see.

At length the bands struck up the solemn measures of the national hymn; the people took it up as they fell back and made way for the procession that was to present to them their future King, whom so few of them had ever seen. First came the royal guard in their blue and gold uniforms, followed by all the officials of the court, glittering with orders and decorations; next followed the priests in their flowing vestments, and after them the King. Lenore looked no farther, for she caught sight of the man she was looking for, and it was fully a minute before she grasped the fact that it

was he, Raoul Delorme, a captain in the Königreich army, who was the central figure of all this pomp and ceremony. There he walked in his rich coronation robes, supported by the Archbishop on one side and the Commander-in-chief of the army on the other, apparently as calm and composed as when he had ascended the rickety stairs of the old mill and stepped across the foot-worn threshold of her apartment. What did it all mean? Where was Prince Karl? She had no time to notice that the Duke and their attendants were as much astounded as herself. She felt faint, and everything revolved around her; but the Countess Hilda, who sat behind her, brought her to her senses by giving a nervous, hysterical giggle, and throwing herself into the arms of the man who sat next to her. The Duke seized his daughter by the arm and shook it a little as he gasped out:

“Did you know it, Lenore? Did you know it all the time?”

“Did I know what?” she asked calmly,

for she thought her senses might be deceiving her.

“That Delorme was Prince Karl himself?”

“I had not an idea of it,” she answered truthfully, and even now she scarcely realized it, at the same time that she was already wondering why she had never suspected it.

A hush fell on the assembled crowd. The King was ascending the steps of the platform covered with crimson cloth and draped with flags, trophies of the conquests that the country had made in former times. The Archbishop and the General, who had preceded, advanced solemnly to receive him, a prayer was made over the heads of the kneeling multitude, the sacred oil was placed on his forehead, and the crown on his head.

“Long live the King! Long live King Karl!” shouted the people. The King stepped forward and gazed around him. His eyes met Lenore’s for the first time and flashed a message which hers answered over the space between them.

When the tumult had subsided again, he began to speak to his people. He spoke of the late King, of his life and sorrows, of what he had done for the people and what he had hoped to do and could not for the little strength that had been his. He spoke of him, not formally, but affectionately and simply, and the people applauded, for they had loved the dead King. Then he said something of what he himself hoped to do, and a little of himself and his life.

“I want you to know from my own lips who and what I am,” he explained, “for there have been many false reports.” Next, he paid a royal tribute to General Malakoff for his care of himself as well as his services to his country, and the people shouted as if they never meant to stop.

“And now, my people,” the new King continued, “there is one thing that I want to tell you myself. I know that princes and kings are supposed to love and marry for state reasons and not for warm, spontaneous, human love, and it is this that makes so many a royal life, with

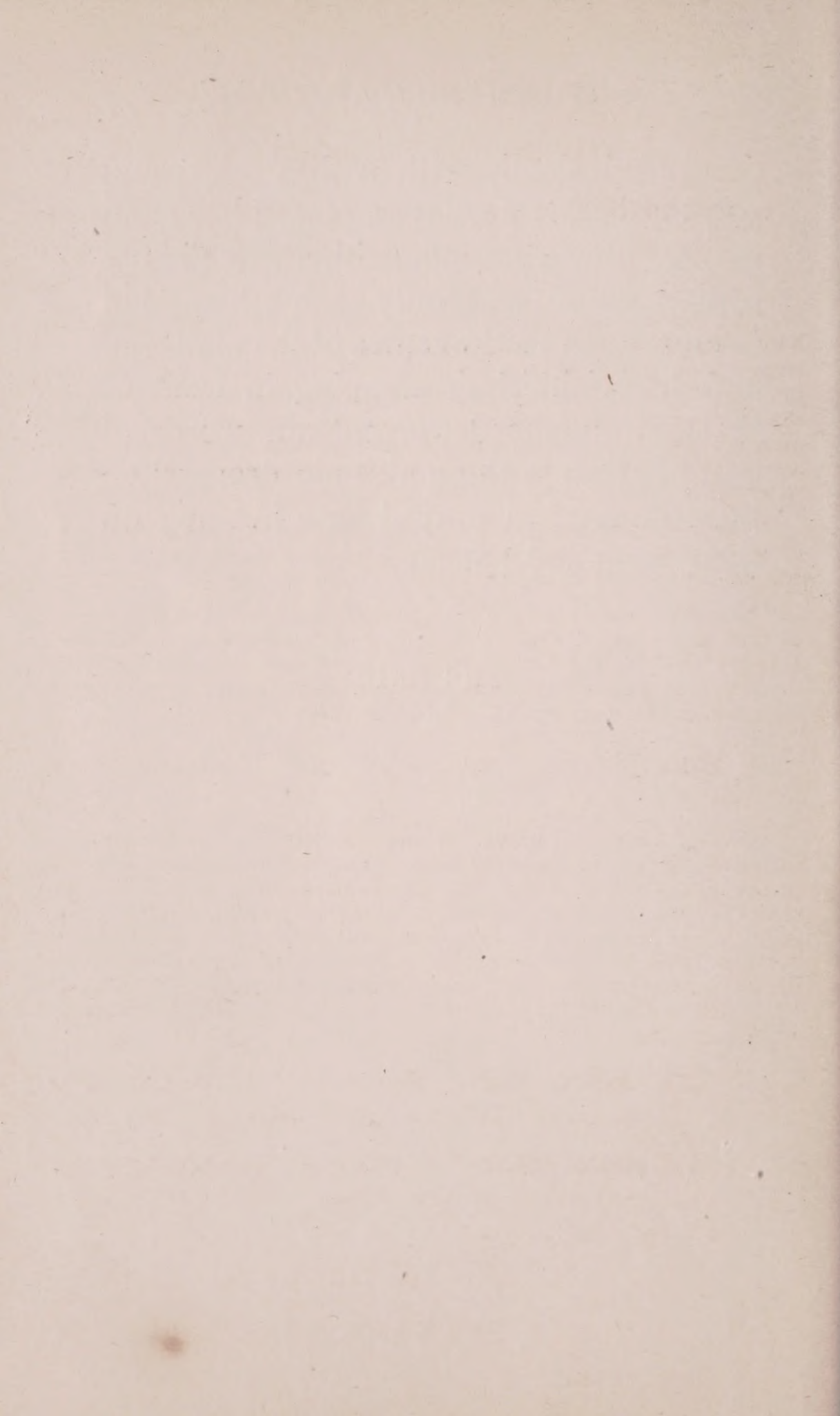
its splendor and luxury that some of you envy so much, the least enviable existence on earth. Mine, I am thankful to say, will not be one of these ; for I have wooed and won a wife for myself."

A breathless hush fell on the multitude, and although the King seemed hardly to speak louder than in a drawing-room, every syllable was heard to the farthest limits of the grove. He turned so that he could face Lenore as she sat, every pulse throbbing in anxious expectation, on the highest seats of all, to the right of the platform. " You all of you know the Princess Lenore of Herzogthum, by reputation if not by sight," he continued in his clear, friendly voice. " You know that she was your prisoner a short time ago ; but what you do not know is that I, your King, was her jailer. There is an old mill in the mountains, set deep in the forest, by the side of a rushing river, which I am going to buy if money can do it ; for it was there that we learned to love one another with no thought of rank or station. I afterwards visited her father's

court in the guise of an ambassador for myself, Prince Karl, and not knowing who or what I was, she agreed to marry me, with the one stipulation that I claim her before all the world, though she did not know that her request would be granted so literally. She would have nothing underhand, and she would not give people a chance to say that she was ashamed of her choice. There were many things about my life that she did not understand, mysteries and concealments, but she believed in me in spite of all. And now——” He advanced towards the side of the platform where the Princess was sitting, red and white by turns, and trying in vain to stop the beating of her heart with her hand. “And now what she promised to me, a poor soldier in the army, I, the King, wish to ask from her before all the world. Lenore, you will not refuse the King the love you promised the soldier? You will be my wife, my Queen?” He stopped at the foot of the steps that led up to her seat and held out his hand. She rose and

descended slowly with a firm step ; and pausing beside her lover, placed her hand in his. For a second, neither saw the upturned sea of faces, only each other. He led her forth to the centre of the platform, and the Archbishop, stepping in front of them, pronounced the solemn words of betrothal while the multitude dropped on their knees and prayed for a blessing on their King and Queen.

THE END.



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